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CUTHBERT ST. ELME, M.P.

OR,

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE

OF

A POLITICIAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CUTHBERT ST. ELME, M.P.

CHAPTER I.

THE NAME.

It was a long and dreary journey that lay before Cuthbert. Through the fair west, rushing past greenlands and scenes of pastoral beauty, past great towns, and onward to the calm summer sea, nature with her blandishments failed to win a regard from the disconsolate lover.

Yes, in youth separation is worse than death. Death comes; we bid farewell to those we love, and, returning to our parent

dust, consign our thoughts with our bodies to the tomb. But separation bears with it our hope, our misgiving. In the grave we can no longer contemplate those left behind. In the grave of distance our hope, our misgiving, are renewed with multiplied intensity. Thoughts fly faster than words. The spirit vainly hopes to hover near the scene where alone joy can live—vainly hopes to hover near a scene, near actions far beyond its ken. Hard is his lot who, following with his eye the road to that “beloved and consecrated spot where Lea is,” uselessly repines at the social bonds paralysing his movements, a captive to the world’s expediency.

Still, as Cuthbert crossed the sea, and landed on the beautiful green shores of Ireland, his grief could not entirely resist his youth, and the influence exercised by nature on the hearts of all

Englishmen. There is no native so susceptible as an Englishman of picturesque scenery. He may not be as good a judge of arts as his fellow Europeans, but in true earnest appreciation and enjoyment of nature the British subject stands unrivalled. Whether it be from his devotion to field sports, or from his inherent desire to become a landed proprietor, it is beyond a doubt that on an Englishman's heart a landscape exercises as great an effect as on an Italian a picture, on a Frenchman a song, or on a Dutchman a canal. Give twenty Englishmen the choice between the Apollo Belvidere and Chamounix, nineteen will choose the latter. This love of nature is apparent in every development of the English mind. Our greatest painters have been those who have devoted their talent to the illustration of scenery. Our most popular poets have been those who

dwelt on the charms and beauties of the country. Travel through Europe, on the banks of Como, at Castellamare, or beautiful Sorrento, the choicest sites are in the possession of Englishmen. Look at our lower classes. To the best conducted no treat is so delightful as a walk to the summit of Richmond Hill, or a row on the glassy waters of the wood-clad Thames. And thus to Cuthbert the comeliness of God's work went far to reconcile him to the loss of man's, nay of woman's affection.

As in life, there is a compensation even in the greatest affliction, so Cuthbert was to find some comfort in his exile.

Lord Beaconsfield's Irish property was contiguous to that of Lord St. Elme. Owing to Edward's more generous policy, the general discontent was much modified in the lands owning him as master. His

minority, and his large English resources, had placed him without much sacrifice in the position of a munificent landlord. His love of sport had induced frequent and not unwilling visits to the land of his blood. Partly therefore from natural kindliness, partly from personal convenience he had identified his interests with those of his tenantry. Human nature is at best not indifferent to prosperity. The Beaconsfield tenantry was prosperous, consequently it was loyal. But Edward's popularity had been much promoted by the exertions of the clergyman who held the living of Beston, of which he was the patron. Burton, the college and travelling tutor, had succeeded, as of right, to his pupil's parish. He had married a gentle and accomplished woman, the model of a clergyman's wife. Happy in his home, he had never for a day quitted the scenes

of his charities and his happiness. As the Protestant minister and the judicious dispenser of his patron's bounties, he had on every side earned good will. The peasant endeavoured to profit by the improvements he suggested. The roystering squire softened in his presence, and while proffering hospitality, asked and sometimes even followed his advice. Nay, Father Dennis, the ultramontane and the patriot, had mentioned his name at the altar with encomium, and blessed him with faltering voice and tearful eye.

It was therefore with no small pleasure that Cuthbert looked forward to meet his valued friend, to travel with him over past scenes, and to canvass with him future prospects. Burton possessed those qualities essentially necessary in a clergyman, the qualities belonging to a man of the world. Unaffected in his piety, strict in the ob-

servances of religion, he did not disdain those arts of conciliation and forbearance prescribed by the sacred, and admired by the profane. A true Christian is a true gentleman. Burton knew that it was not sufficient to avoid giving intentional offence. He felt it his duty to consider the accessories of those with whom he had to deal, to graduate his conduct to their circumstances, to divine their susceptibilities, and, by discovering their weaknesses, to remove even the possibility of inflicting a wound. None therefore could approach him without pleasure, or leave him without benefit.

On Cuthbert's first arrival at Bradon, Lord Elmwood's seat, the agent had met him, as in duty bound. He was a gentlemanlike and astute man, sedulous of his master's interests, and not indifferent to his own.

Cuthbert had prepared himself for a mass of business, the study of accounts, the projection of improvements.

“Well, Mr. Slaney,” he said, “shall we begin to-morrow?”

“There is not much to be done, sir. Your presence here is more what was required than any thing else. Lord St. Elme approves all my suggestions. The people will now believe that I have the sanction of the family, when they see one of the name.”

“The name! Indeed,” answered St. Elme with some bitterness. “Then I am a species of dummy, simply the incarnation of a name. I am not supposed to exert my mind at all; but to walk about and show myself. Don’t you think you had better send some one about with me to point me out, for fear there should be a mistake? That’s Mr. St. Elme, with

a white hat. The name is arrived at Bradon. Is that the way you will announce my arrival in the county gazette?"

"Why, really, sir," began the agent. In fact he had sent a paragraph to the local journals not very dissimilar in language.

"How long will you require the dissyllable? In London, though only an individual, I might corporeally be of some little use."

Lord Elmwood's instructions were precise, and the agent answered accordingly.

"Why, sir, if you can manage to stay here a month or six weeks, I hope matters will be sufficiently quiet for you to go away."

"And is there then absolutely nothing for me to do?"

"I can't say that; but as to the business

of the estate, all that can be done has already been carried out."

The agent had regained his composure, and continued with some plausibility.

"The fact is, the poor here have become irritated at Lord Elmwood's long absence. They will not draw any distinction between one earl and another. Lord Beaconsfield comes here every year, and they cannot understand why Lord Elmwood does not pursue the same course. They will not make allowances for his political position. In fact they scarcely understand it. They can understand Lord Beaconsfield's absence, as the news of his approaching marriage has been carefully circulated, and Irishmen are amazingly tickled by a love affair."

"But what has been done for the tenantry here?" interrupted Cuthbert.

“Every thing I assure you that can be done. I consulted Mr. Burton, and Major Stone, Lord Beaconsfield’s agent, and have acted towards Lord Elmwood’s tenantry in exactly the same manner as they have acted towards the Beston people. I can show you everything in black and white. But one thing was necessary to do away with the unpleasant impression, the arrival of Lord Elmwood or some member of his lordship’s family. His lordship hopes you will open the house a little, and he has written to have your name inserted in the commission of the peace.”

Cuthbert was not satisfied. He said nothing, but the agent gathered his feeling from his countenance.

“I assure you, sir, I will do every thing in my power to facilitate any plans you may have to suggest. My position has been any thing but pleasant. I am not

sure of my life at any moment. One of my ricks has been burnt; and I scarcely ever get a night's rest for some alarm or other. Mrs. Slaney is nearly worn to death. I am sure if it were not for Mr. and Mrs. Burton, I don't know what would have happened: they have taken the children."

Cuthbert was touched by the agent's statement. He pretty well understood his position. Lord Elmwood's property was hampered, and his expenses were very great; he spent his income in England; and the agent having but little margin for concessions, was the scapegoat of his master's unpopularity.

So with softened tones Cuthbert answered:

"I shall do all in my power to assist you. I shall consult Mr. Burton, who I am informed is very popular, and who,

from being an old friend of mine, will render me every assistance. Meanwhile make all the use of my name possible. Let every one know of my arrival; and as Lord Beaconsfield is likewise held in affection, you can give out the fact, and let it be generally known, that he and I are not only cousins, but almost brothers, that we were both educated by Mr. Burton, that we have always lived together, and are actuated by the same feelings on almost every subject. I shall make use of the horse which I have, thanks to you, to ride over to Beston parsonage. If you will call here to-morrow I will go with you through the estate. I shall beg Mr. Burton to accompany us."

The two men separated with no unfriendly feelings. The agent was keen enough to appreciate Cuthbert's ability and ready insight into the intricacies of

business. And Cuthbert could feel for the agent; his dependance for livelihood on a hard taskmaster; his steady courage and perseverance amidst the dangers that surrounded, not only himself, but those dearest to him.

He said as much to Burton after the first warm greetings. A few words were sufficient to tell the clergyman of late events, of his successes and his mortifications.

“And this,” continued Cuthbert, “is the lot of all those connected with a man who aims at greatness—or rather power. Whether his servants or his kinsmen, they are bound to sacrifice to him their hopes, their talents, their life, nay their affections. I might be useful as a man to mankind. I am forced away that my name may be useful to a man. Slaney, a man of talent, a gentleman, drudges on at a

small pittance, his health shattered, his heart wrung, his temper soured, his reputation tarnished, his life threatened, while he forces from the poor peasant a few hundreds more, that Lord Elmwood, by giving luxurious dinners, may maintain his parliamentary influence."

Burton led his pupil into the next room.

His beautiful wife was singing at the piano, while a brood of little children were playing round her, lovingly and gleefully.

Cuthbert's heart softened to the world, but scarcely to his cousin.

"Burton," he said, "such might have been my mother's life. She was also a sacrifice."

A little child came tottering with a chair for Cuthbert. He sat down, and the child climbed on his knee, and laughed

with joy, as she trotted to the merry music of her mother.

Then the music ceased, and the children ran off to bed. Cuthbert retired with his two friends to the clergyman's study. They talked of many things: of plans for the poor, of politics, of books, of happiness.

"Ah! Burton, yours is the life best suited for me."

"For Charles, Mr. St. Elme—not for you."

"Then why, in spite of all my grief, am I so happy with you?"

"Because our life suits us, and we are happy."

"Your feelings of happiness when with us are the reflex of our content; yet you would not be happy as a clergyman, nor your wife as a clergyman's wife if you were the clergyman."

“ Yet, I have always liked calm pleasures.”

“ Yes, Cuthbert, but not calm duties. When we travelled together, you liked the act of travelling, and I did not. In return, I liked the balls and the theatres, which you despised. Even now I am afraid I should like them if they came in my way. But I would give but little to make a telling speech in the house, or to write an exciting novel.”

“ Yet, as a child, I was very different.”

“ True, the world has changed you. Perhaps had you been a richer man, or a man of humbler parentage, you would have made a good clergyman. You are a man of distinguished birth,² but of small fortune. You want to equalize your attributes. Your nature is perhaps the same at

bottom; but education has developed some of your qualities, and suppressed others. You are gradually changing from a man of contemplation, to a man of action. You read less, and work more. I read more and work less."

"But still you work."

"He does indeed, Mr. St. Elme."

"But my work is almost mechanical now."

"And you write."

"But much less than I did before. The more you read, the less you are inclined to write,—the more you learn, the less do you feel disposed to teach. A man who reads much, or thinks much, will never be a man of action. The great author is he who thinks with his pen in hand; the great statesman is he who plans as he executes, striking instinctively at some great idea, and developing it with every

incident. A man who propounds a theory, propounds what is impracticable."

"But, thinking these things, you could put your thoughts into execution."

"Perhaps if I ceased thinking. You used to think, but you did nothing. You have been forced to do; you probably think less. One is a good preparation for another.

"A man in my station attains the summit of his career young, when a man in your station begins his. My action is therefore in youth, yours in manhood. I was rector of Beston at seven-and-twenty, I shall probably die rector of Beston. I have nothing before me but to think. You are a member of Parliament at three or four and twenty, and will perhaps die prime minister. Your future

therefore is to act. You are in for it now—you cannot change your career. If you do, you are a wretched man.”

“Then you would advise me not to read.”

“Certainly not to read as a student. In that respect your education is complete. You have a good style, and that is all you require. Read certainly for the information necessary to your career. If you write, write with the same intention. Do not write to obtain fame as a writer, but let your writings be ancillary to your political interests. Even then they are susceptible of high literary excellence. Machiavelli the politician, Montesquieu the legist, Cæsar the soldier, Walton the angler, wrote of politics, law, campaigns, and fishing. Each in his line has produced a work lasting for ages.”

“To tell you the truth, that comes

naturally. I scarcely open a book, but I think of the circumstances for the application of every good line as a quotation, or for turning to practical use any new truth or maxim."

CHAPTER II.

REAL LIFE.

AND Cuthbert during his retreat proved himself the man of action, and carried out the character forced on him by circumstances. His leisure hours were spent, not in the literary trifling of intellectual luxury, nor the elaboration of abstract scheming; but in the perusal of those dry blue folios deluged by a grateful country on her unpaid legislators, or the execution of feasible projects for the improvement of his starving neighbours.

Of a surety Lord Elmwood could not have chosen a more useful representative. Cuthbert's exertions were worthy of a better reward. Frank, open, and generous, with the ready assistance of Burton, and the prestige attaching to his friendship with Lord Beaconsfield, Cuthbert soon contrived to attract the esteem of a generous and impulsive people. From the first day on which he commenced his progress, the agent found in his coadjutor an assistance far more real than that of the ideal name. To him the poor opened their hearts, disclosed their grievances, and yielded the claim to imaginary wrongs.

In the evening he found consolation in the peaceful domesticity of his friends; or round his bachelor board sought distraction in the hitherto strange conversation of an Irish squirearchy, amidst spirits not

wholly subdued by the spectres of famine, disease, and desolation.

Blessed was the gift of nature that framed his mind for occupation. His thoughts, diverted from their gloom, lost none of their healthy elasticity. The neglect of Norah, the constraint of concealment visible in the letters of Edith, were partially obliterated by the excitement of benevolence.

Yet there were moments, moments of rest, when recollections crowded round him full of bitterness. When once or twice he received cold, icy notes from her he had loved so truly, how hard was the contrast with those long letters, full of truth and affection, desired so impatiently in days gone by, and preserved with such sacred veneration.

And perhaps had he been able to read the hearts of those who, in England, were

bound up in his fate, he would have found still greater compensation for his suffering: the noble heart of Edith wrung by the sight of falsehood she could not avert; Norah even in her gayest moments not unscathed by remorse; and the Elmwoods recoiling at the benefits showered on them by the honest energy of the noble being whose affections they had thwarted, whose prospects they had perhaps irrevocably destroyed by a selfish and bootless intrigue.

One morning, about three weeks after his arrival, Cuthbert, to his astonishment, received a letter from Dawnay. He opened it with reluctance. Distrust for his schoolfellow had gradually grown into a feeling approaching dislike. To his surprise, nay to his satisfaction, the letter was couched in terms of manly and frank friendship. He regretted that Cuthbert's

sudden departure had prevented him from giving expression to the pleasure experienced at his parliamentary success. Their long acquaintance rendered Cuthbert's career one to him of great interest. He hoped that in future their political sentiments, by assimilation, would render Cuthbert's achievements a source of still greater gratulation. He ended :

* * * * *

“The session will be prolonged on account of affairs in Ireland. Could you not manage to come over? Your recent local experience would give your opinion additional weight—a weight which I hope you will throw into the scale of the government.

“On this occasion I cannot vote with Lord Elmwood, and for once therefore we shall be united on a great question.

“Not being in your confidence, I do not feel at liberty to touch on other matters; but pray forgive me for telling you that none of your interests would suffer from your return to England. The Elmwoods, *entre nous soit dit*, are not behaving in my opinion very well towards one who, in less than a month, has done wonders for them in Ireland. Political considerations, perhaps public duty, may be considered as paramount to family affection; and Burney’s influence may be a stake worth a deep game.”

* * * * *

He was but a clumsy artificer after all, this young statesman. Cuthbert’s perceptive qualities had been sharpened by contact with the world. Although touched by apparent sincerity in the first paragraphs of Sir Hugh’s letter, he could

not fail to detect the intention barely cloaked by the concluding sentences.

Yet there was some truth in Dawnay's remarks. Cuthbert's personal experience, however short, was of value in the uncertain state of public affairs. He might multiply instances of national characteristics evoked by present circumstances, characteristics to be consulted and conciliated by a legislation of emergency. A few days at least he might be spared. He would consult Slaney and Burton—the first with reference to his cousin's interests, the latter for his own.

And, strange to say, others besides Cuthbert and Sir Hugh had entertained ideas not very different. The two measures for which Cuthbert's absence had been desired were now irrevocable, accomplished facts. He could not be kept in exile for ever. Even that worst of tyrants,

“L’ami des hommes,” the father of Mirabeau, had in time learnt to relent towards his own flesh and blood. And Lord Elmwood could not wish wantonly to inflict an injury on his young kinsman. Cuthbert had done good service in Ireland; why should he not return, and if possible make up for lost time with his ladye-love?

Such had been the reflections of Lord Elmwood. A man of action, he had lost no time in conveying his instructions to the obsequious Slaney.

“I enclose,” he wrote in diplomatic language, “a copy of the bill about to be brought forward by the government. Show it to Mr. St. Elme; and without compromising me in any manner, endeavour to ascertain his sentiments on the proposed measure. Judging by his ante-

cedents and the reports he has sent to me on the state of Ireland, I am led to think that he will be inclined to disapprove it. Should my judgment be right, you will not oppose any wish on his part to return to England for he debate. Nay, on the contrary, you might carefully suggest the propriety of such a course. I trust to your well known discretion in this matter; and believe me, my dear Slaney, I shall not miss any opportunity of proving to you my sense of obligation for the many and great services you have so ably rendered me."

Penetrated with these sentiments Slaney paid his usual morning visit to his patron's name. The unconscious community of intention increased the cordiality of their meeting. They had learnt mutually to respect each other during the progress of their arduous task. They had worked in

harmony when the work was irksome. Now Slaney would be the messenger of good tidings, and a happy influence was present at their interview.

“I have brought you the bill, Mr. St. Elme, thinking you would like to see it.”

“What bill? Ah! I see; this new Irish measure. I should like to see it. But I wish you would drop that word Mr.—I think we have known each other long enough?”

“You are very good. Believe me, I shall never forget your kindness, nor the immense assistance I have derived from your support and co-operation. It is wonderful how much has been done since your arrival.”

“The name, Slaney, the name——”

“That is a fiction long exploded. I am sure the papers ought to tell you as

much. You have not only succeeded in making yourself popular through the whole country, but you have managed even to diminish much of the odium that attached to me."

"Well, that is a good thing at any rate. But, tell me, what do you think of the bill? I have some thoughts of running over for the debate. What do you say, Slaney?"

Slaney was afraid to speak. He had not as yet ascertained his young friend's opinion. He answered cautiously.

"I have read the bill, and think it a very bad one. The first reading, I believe, is for Friday; the second, I suppose, on Monday."

"Let's see; to-day's Monday. I suppose there will be no debate on the first reading."

"I do not know; there is some idea of opposition at every stage."

"Well, I will read the bill on my way to Burton's, and we can talk over it to-morrow. I shall be in time for Thursday's boat if I start to-morrow."

"It would be hard work. However, we can talk over it, as you say, to-morrow morning. I suppose if that affair of Casey's is not arranged, you will not go?"

The agent had found a capital reserve.

"Certainly not. We must get Father Dennis to speak to him. Would you write the Father a note, asking him to breakfast with me to-morrow, at nine? I wish to speak to him on many matters. But I must be off, I am going to Boston on foot, and have made my appointment for eleven."

CHAPTER III.

AN APPARITION.

It was a beautiful morning when Cuthbert started on his walk. His path lay through a wood that appeared almost primæval. It was his favourite track. Here, in his melancholy moments, he would wile away his time, thinking of his grief; or occasionally giving way for a short time to his old habits of dreaming, he would conjure up those happy scenes that in his youth had been awakened by the turf fire.

Perhaps still he was a dreamer. His actions had been the works of inspiration. His old nature was not yet wholly conquered. Yet the life of action had considerably deteriorated his power of dreaming. The impressions of his mind were fainter ; the features of his eidolon more hardened and severe.

Then reverting to his real position, he would read his Blue-book, his Mill, his Tacitus, or any work of history or statistics, that would grind down his intellect to its proper hardness, until the eidolon lay shattered in the dust.

This day the bill was the companion of his wanderings. It was indeed a hard grindstone, dull enough, complicated and material enough, to destroy any amount of the divine afflatus. Yet for the moment it was congenial. Taking a cigar, Cuthbert sat himself down to master the details

under a spreading elm, retired a short distance from the roadway. Near him was some low brushwood, about him trees. The road on one side ran down a deep avenue, far into the wood; on the other a cleared space commanded a vast extent of country.

Cuthbert had read the bill, and was jotting down with his pencil a few comments, when his attention was aroused by a rustling in the bushes near him, followed by a sound resembling an hysterical laugh. He half rose from his seat to listen. Again the sound was repeated—a sharp quavering sound, tapering as it were into a shriek. This was followed by the cadence of a melancholy air, sung by a clear soprano voice. The cadence or variation on two or three notes was repeated more than once, in the same tones, and the same manner. Then again

burst forth that wild laugh, coming nearer and nearer, and the dark copsewood moved as though some one were separating the twigs.

At length a form emerged from the wood opposite to Cuthbert. It was that of a boy whose beautiful complexion was glowing from exercise. He was about twelve years old, tall rather for his age. His features might have been the model for a sculptor. His hair hung in ringlets around him. At the sight of Cuthbert he stopped as one moving in the dark who touches an unexpected obstacle. He seemed neither abashed nor frightened. Only he stayed his course, and for a short space, stared vacantly at the recumbent figure of the young senator.

Then scarce moving a muscle, he pealed forth the same sharp quavering cry. It was a laugh neither of merriment, nor of

grief. While it lasted his eyes stared vacantly. At length he ended, his mouth open, his jaw hanging, his tongue protruding on the nether lip.

Cuthbert spoke kindly to him, inquired whence he came, whither his steps were bent. Once again the boy laughed his laugh unconsciously—his laugh neither of merriment nor of grief. It was a sound expressing every feeling, but meaning none—like the cry of a bird trained to imitate the human voice, and employing the unnatural notes as the indication of each animal emotion. Then the boy turned, and once more plunged into the brushwood.

“An ancient,” thought Cuthbert, “would have imagined a meeting with a rustic deity, whose gift was madness. Poor boy! he is an idiot.”

Thus interrupted, Cuthbert could not resume his occupations. Folding up the document and placing it in his pocket with his note book, he rose from his sylvan seat to continue his walk. At times he heard here and there in the copse the wild laugh, or the still wilder and more melancholy cadence, till it sank silent into the distance.

Cuthbert walked rapidly to his destination. He was anxious to consult Burton; his anxiety no doubt increased by the assurance that the advice he sought would coincide with his own opinion.

Burton was waiting Cuthbert's arrival with his wife. There were few occasions on which she did not participate in his duties, as well as in his pleasures. Her mind, ready at expedient, exercised a sort of oracular influence over her husband,

invariably directing him to a sound and worthy judgment. Cuthbert had learnt to appreciate her virtues and her sterling sense. He had no secrets from her that were confided to her husband. In all their councils her gentle voice contributed not a little to the ultimate decision.

By a tacit understanding on either side, the Burton's had learnt the relations subsisting between their friend and Norah, whose character they appreciated at its full value. It was this knowledge that had led them to stimulate Cuthbert to exertions which might deaden his grief, and fortify him against misfortune. They feared the effect of disappointment on that mind not yet hardened to reverses, and capable perhaps, when the first buoyancy of success should subside, to court a scholastic ease for which even his short

acquaintance with the world had disqualified him.

Yes, youth passes quickly, and Cuthbert though young had launched irrevocably into the sea of life. His adolescence, his pupil-state, were passed with its discipline and facility of apprehension. His mind was no longer fitted to embrace a new career, although the stern self-discipline of manhood has scarce been formed into a system.

Cuthbert found Burton in the act of perusing Spencer's view of the state of Ireland.

"A capital preparation," he said, "for the object on which I am about to ask your advice. Read this bill while I consult Mrs. Burton on another subject."

He gave to Mrs. Burton Dawnay's letter, and taking her husband's book, waited in silence for their replies.

Burton was the first to speak.

“Strange,” he said, extending his hand for the volume, “how national truths live through all ages. Governments seem to agree with Irenæus, ‘that it is the fatal destiny of this land, that no purposes whatsoever which are meant for her good, will prosper or take good effect;’ and believing in the theory, they multiply the ‘unsoundness of their counsels and plots,’ taking the part of ‘the desperate phisitian, to wish his diseased patient dead, rather than to apply the best endeavours of his skill for his recovery.’ ”

“And therefore I think of going to London to oppose the bill.”

“You could not do better. Everything is going on smoothly. If necessary you can return.”

“Still I am afraid that the ministers will be turned out.”——

“Are you a Ministerialist? Would you object to the Opposition assuming power?”

“I am of no party. I vote on minor matters with my uncle; but I cannot say I admire his politics.”

“I wish you were of some party, Cuthbert—nay, an ardent partizan.”

“What! voting against my conscience twice out of three times!”

“Let your conscience discover who those are most likely to govern the State with benefit. Support them firmly when you can do so honestly. On some few individual measures defer your judgment to that of your political synod. Every party will commit some faults, even the acts you support may turn out failures.

Look to the general conduct of the best men. Believe me, they will govern better with the worst legislation, than inferior men with the best."

"And what do you think of Sir Hugh Dawnay and his letter?"

"I think for your own interests you ought to go. Perhaps it may bring you good fortune. At any rate you will ascertain the truth. As to your politics I can say nothing; but if you can do so honestly, pray, pray vote with your uncle's party. He has much to annoy him. Charles heard to day that he was far from well. He is your nearest relation; and surely if you can please him it will be your happiness to do so."

Cuthbert was sad during the day. He once more showed himself to the villagers, all vying for his greeting and blessing the

day that had brought him to their succour.

He could not determine as to his movements.

"I can scarcely make up my mind to leave them with my task half accomplished," he said to his companions, sitting down to a dinner delayed by his long tour of inspection. "Perhaps a day may undo all that we have accomplished."

"Let us trust for the best, Mr. St. Elme," answered the clergyman's wife. "We have always trusted and hoped. In the long run the best has generally befallen us."

"Can you tell me any thing of Casey? I fear he has been seen about with strangers. That is a bad sign. Slaney, who met him with his companions, declares he recognizes one of them named

Barney, who was implicated in some affair six years ago. I have asked Father Dennis to breakfast to-morrow. Will you come and talk Casey over, and I can then make up my mind as to going?"

The breakfast party was arranged and the conversation changed.

"By the way, who is a curious idiot boy I met in the wood; he startled me by his shrill, weird laugh, and was well dressed?"

"Poor boy! his name is Alfred Sinclair. He lives with his sister in lodgings at Mr. Slaney's farm house. She is an admirable person, and a great assistance to me. She devotes herself to this brother, and I am told has refused many advantageous offers of marriage on his account."

"Is she Irish?"

"No, English I believe. Her father, as

far as I can make out, a merchant at Belfast, was ruined in some manner. They lived for many years abroad; but on Mr. Sinclair's death Ida, my friend, preferred returning to Ireland. She lived for some time at Dundalk, where we met her; and finding that she had some idea of a country life, we mentioned Mr. Slaney's apartment at the farm, which he was about to leave on his marriage. She has not been well for some time, or you would have seen her here perhaps, though she seems to dislike even the little society we can offer her."

"What an interesting person!"

"So my wife thinks," rejoined Burton.

"Miss Sinclair is the theme of frequent praise."

"She deserves it, poor girl. I never saw such unflinching constancy as she exhibits under that awful infliction. Occa-

sionally the boy becomes very wild and unmanageable; but she has obtained such an ascendancy over him, that a look can silence him."

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT ADVENTURE.

THE night was drawing on, and Cuthbert prepared to depart. The day previous he had left his horse at the parsonage, the animal having slipped a shoe. It was now brought round, and Cuthbert trotted off as the moon was rising.

His road lay through the wood, and he had advanced some distance when the limping of his horse caused him to dismount. The shoe had evidently been

replaced by a clumsy practitioner, and caused the animal pain. Passing his arm therefore through the bridle, Cuthbert walked slowly by the side of his disabled steed.

He had not proceeded far when his ear was struck by a distant cry. The scene around him was still, and he bent forward his head to discover the nature of the sound. After a pause of short duration it was repeated, and repeated again a third time. It was the laugh of the idiot.

The hour was late, and the sound was unusual. Cuthbert listened again, and fancied other voices mingled with the laugh. In that rustic country, the inhabitants retired to rest early. The sounds therefore must be caused by some events not of ordinary occurrence. Such was the conclusion rapidly attained by the

thoughts of Cuthbert. The road was covered with grass; and Cuthbert therefore, remounting his horse, urged him to quicken his pace. As he rode on, the sounds were frequently repeated, till at length, when the horse stopped short in pain, he was not far from the spot whence they proceeded.

Alighting quickly, and fastening the horse to a branch, Cuthbert struck off by a side path leading to the agent's farm buildings. As he approached them, he distinctly heard more than one voice in energetic discussion.

At length he reached the buildings; moving noiselessly, he at length paused to watch the scenes before him.

In the yard were four men gesticulating with vehemence. A crape covered their faces, but in one of them Cuthbert easily recognized the stout build of Casey. They

were all armed with bludgeons, which they brandished in their excitement.

Before them was a very different group of three persons. One was evidently a maid servant. She was on her knees, beating her breast, and in wailing tones entreating for mercy. Behind her, in an angle of the wall, crouched the idiot boy, gazing, almost convulsed with terror, but unable to repress his wild shrill laugh.

Before them stood Ida Sinclair.

She was tall beyond the usual stature of women. Her dark hair, bound over her brow, was slightly disordered by the night breeze. A dark cloth jacket, surmounted by a white collar, displayed the grace of a perfect figure, and contrasted with the grey skirt that fell gracefully around her. In one hand she held a small lantern, in the other a pistol.

Her cheeks were flushed, and her

eyes kindled. Her short proud upper lip was curled in disdain, almost in defiance.

Cuthbert never forgot the picture. In one moment he had gathered all the details. They were stamped indelibly on his memory.

"Then ye will not swear, Miss Ida?" asked Casey; "we do not want to injure a hair on your head. Swear now, do Miss Ida, for the love of Mary, ——"

"I will not swear. I will use every exertion to bring you to justice."

The idiot laughed his laugh.

"Curse you! I'll stifle you!" said another, brandishing his staff.

"Now, can't you be quiet, Barney. Don't you see he's an innocent?" interrupted Casey, angrily.

"Oh, do swear Miss Ida, now do. Why would ye have me harm you? Ye're the

angel of the town. It isn't you, Miss Ida—it's the agent."

One of Casey's comrades advanced menacingly.

"A step further and I fire," she exclaimed, raising her hand.

The ruffian daunted, receded to his brethren.

"Why should you wish to burn the agent's corn? What good will it bring you? You, Casey, the father of a family, should recollect his wife and little ones."

"Then why would he bring ruin to me and the childer?"

"Come, Casey," brutally rejoined he they called Barney. "We cannot be stopped by a woman. She must swear or go to h—ll."

"Bedad, Barney, ye'll drive me mad. Stand back, will ye? If it hadn't been for

your cursed awkwardness we might have done the job and no one be the wiser. Ah! now, Miss Ida, avourneen, will ye take the oath?"

"Never."

Cuthbert held his breath. The chances were four to one against him as a man. His appearance might occasion an outrage perhaps to be prevented by the determination of the noble girl. Her resolution imposed respect even on the hardened hearts before her. They could not imbrue their hands in the blood of a woman.

She continued.

"How does the agent injure you? What has he done?"

"Faith! and doesn't he poison the ear of the young master against me; and wont he turn me out on the world, off my bit of a farm?"

“He will not. This very evening he told me that to-morrow the young master was going to speak to you kindly, and hear your complaints.”

“Bless him! But, Miss Ida, you’re only sayin’ this to soften me.”

“I would not tell a falsehood to save my life.”

“Have done now,” growled Barney. “We did not come all this way for your sake only, Casey. We came to punish an enemy to Ireland. Hold your cursed noise.”

He ran towards the idiot.

“Stand back, Barney, or I’ll do ye harm,” cried Casey, grasping his confederate by the shoulder, and hurling him some distance back.

“And it is true now, what you’ve said, Miss Ida?”

“Will ye take the oath, or, Christ! I’ll murder you?” resumed Barney.

The three had been talking together and drew to each other savagely.

“Then will ye swear never to tell of us, if we go home peaceably?”

“I will promise, if you go home, and if you swear to me never to attempt this again.”

“But we will not go home, Casey, ye coward. Ah! ye milk-hearted, to believe that woman’s lies.”

“They are not lies,” cried Cuthbert, leaping the gate, and placing himself before the girl. “Casey, come by my side, the lady will take care of one of you. Casey and I are good against the other two.” Cuthbert held a leaded hunting whip.

“What is it you want? You do not belong to this country. You are ruffians,

coming to murder and rob. Go home, cowards, who would threaten a woman. We'll fight you if you choose. But for your own sakes, I advise you to be off.

"If I am not at home in ten minutes twenty men on horseback and the whole of the two towns will be searching for me through the country. What chance have you of escape? You haven't a friend. Even Casey is your enemy, you cowardly night robbers. You would burn a stack, would you, and murder two women and a child. Be off. You had better take care of yourself, Master Barney. This time you will not find it so easy to get off as the last."

His words were adapted to the comprehension of the banditti. They tried to parley.

"Ah! Casey, ye traitor."

“ Say that word again, Barney, and I’ll flay you.”

“ Then will your honour bear us harmless, if we go away quietly?”

“ I will make no conditions. You must trust to me. I have never been known to injure any one yet.”

“ That’s true, yer honour ; if all were like you,” whined Barney.

“ I’ve told you that in a few minutes my men will be here. For your sakes I advise you to be off. By this time they have probably started.”

Cuthbert’s horse, tired of solitude, neighed opportunely. The effect was electric. Slinking away one by one, they followed each other over the fence.

“ Casey, go and look after my horse. Poor beast, he’s lame.” He turned and bowed to Ida. Offering his arm and

taking her brother by the hand without saying a word, he led them into the house.

The maid followed her mistress sobbing.

CHAPTER V.

A HEROINE.

THEY entered a well-furnished room, exhibiting in many respects the character of its mistress. Books lay strewn about. A piano stood open; near it a harp. A picture hung over the fireplace of a man in the spring of life. The features were strange to Cuthbert, and yet not wholly unfamiliar. In fact, the whole room seemed friendly to Cuthbert, and as he sat by the side of the young high-hearted

girl he felt none of the awkwardness of a new acquaintance.

And indeed there existed between them a certain bond of union. Their mutual friends entertained for them equal feelings of regard, and together they had encountered a common danger.

It was some minutes before they spoke. Though courageous and resolute, Ida was still a woman. The flush of excitement had passed. Pale and exhausted, she seated herself to recover the composure broken by the strange events of the last few minutes.

Alfred lay shuddering on the floor, clasping, still in fear, his sister's dress. Cuthbert leant against a chair contemplating the group. The maid stood at the door sobbing convulsively, and bemoaning the general untowardness of fortune.

But Ida Sinclair's was not a mind to

give way, for any length of time, to emotion. Though young she had struggled with the world too long, too steadily, not to have attained great mastery over her feelings. One by one she had discovered their existence, and successfully combated their intensity. Her temper, originally violent, had succumbed to self-discipline. Her curiosity, her love of admiration, all her woman's faults and woman's weaknesses, had been eradicated by her unswerving resolution. Pride perhaps had shared in the victory. Pride perhaps might have taken part in the sudden effort by which she subdued the remnant of fear, and restored her nerves to their habitual calmness.

And wonderful was the influence of this master-spirit. As she drew herself up Cuthbert ceased to wonder, and her attendant to grieve.

“ Alfred, my poor boy, it is time for you to go to your rest.”

The boy stood up and laughed his laugh rebelliously.

“ Mary, see Master Alfred to his room.”

The maid advanced, but the boy, grasping the table, seemed bent on opposition.

She fixed her eyes upon him steadily. For a moment he endeavoured to meet her steady gaze.

“ Alfred,” she repeated, “ it is time for you to go.”

Even the idiot felt the omission of her first gentle phrase. She kissed his forehead, and with a low laugh he took the servant's hand and left the room.

Cuthbert watched the little scene with interest. This will, this energy, this knowledge of character, yes, and this beauty, is to be wasted on an idiot boy or a few uncultivated peasants.

Ida's voice soon recalled him to the present.

"I have to thank you most sincerely, Mr. St. Elme, for your timely assistance."

"You are indebted to yourself, Miss Sinclair, for the fortunate termination of this terrible affair—for terrible it is in every sense of the word. Your wonderful energy and self-possession drew forth the admiration even of those ruffians."

"May I ask if your arrival was accidental or not?"

"Accidental. But may I ask in turn the reason of your inquiry?"

"I was aware of the meditated attack this morning."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Cuthbert, did you take no steps for your protection?"

"I took all the steps that were per-

mitted. Casey's wife, to whom I have rendered some little service, came to me this morning, and under a promise of secrecy, revealed to me all the circumstances of the plot. The only latitude she gave me was to inform you. She relied on your kindness not to betray her husband; and she thought that if you could speak to him quietly, and relieve him of the impression under which he labours, of malevolence on Mr. Slaney's part, you might dissuade him from this project. I consequently walked over to the House this afternoon, and finding you were absent, left a note begging you to pass this way in the course of the evening. I entered into no details, fearing that the note might fall into the hands of a third person."

"And do you mean, Miss Sinclair, that

you took no further steps for your protection? Really under the circumstances you would have been justified in breaking a promise thus extorted."

"No circumstance, in my opinion, would warrant me in breaking my promise."

She paused, and fearing she had spoken too sternly, she continued in softer tones,

"I know your reputation sufficiently to convince me that you will not betray my secret, nor that of the unfortunate Casey."

Cuthbert was still lost in wonder and admiration.

"I had already made up my mind not to do so. The danger averted, harshness, in the present state of Ireland, were worse than useless. But, Miss Sinclair, surely if you took no other precaution,

you might have sought a refuge for the night at the house of some friend."

"There were many reasons against my so doing. In the first place, it would have created suspicion. In the second, I felt it my duty to endeavour to protect the property of Mr. Slaney, who has ever shown me much kindness; and I relied on my influence with my neighbours. My last reason was perhaps the most cogent. We are all selfish; and I felt that neither myself nor my brother ran any risk even from the worst Irishman."

Cuthbert smiled mournfully.

"You might have had cause to repent your confidence. But you must be tired. Pray let me beg you to retire. You have undergone too much. I will remain here with Casey till the morning."

"There is no occasion for your so

doing, thank you, Mr. St. Elme. I have read that in a battle the safest part of a ship is the aperture made by a cannon ball.

“I hear you think of leaving the country to-morrow. You had perhaps better go home. You may require rest or have preparations to make.”

“After the scene of to-night I shall certainly not go.”

“Perhaps you may still change your intentions.”

“I think not.”

“However, in case you should resolve to return to England, I will take this opportunity of making a request to you in a case which Mr. Slaney declares it beyond his power to decide. I feel that in the present state of things my present dwelling is too lonely for a woman. I

may not always have the good fortune of this evening, and with my poor brother to take care of I would prefer a less secluded position. There is a small cottage in the outskirts of your park, and close by the village. It has stood empty some time, and I would venture to offer myself as a tenant."

"Certainly. I will give orders for its immediate preparation. Meanwhile, pray let me beg you to make use of Mr. Burton's house. I have known him long enough to make the offer, and under every consideration it is not advisable for you to remain here any longer."

"For the present I can do so. I will ask you perhaps to allow one or two of your farm-servants to sleep here until I can take possession of the cottage. But Casey is calling for you, and I think

I hear some other voices. Your servants are probably searching for you. Pray believe how grateful, how deeply grateful, I feel for all your kindness. Still I must beg one more favour, which is, if possible, to remove Casey from the neighbourhood. His conduct this evening may expose him to the vengeance of his evil-disposed comrades."

"Thank you for the suggestion. I shall certainly attend to it."

"Then indeed I have nothing more to ask for, and I will say good night—nay, good bye; for I can scarcely think it possible for a member of Parliament who has seen Ireland so recently to abstain from the approaching debate. I know little of politics, but on this subject I feel strongly. Pray go home. Your men will be a sufficient guard. Good night."

She held out her hand as Cuthbert bowed respectfully.

“God bless you,” she said.

The circumstances warranted the warmth of the expression.

CHAPTER VI.

A PENITENT.

As Cuthbert anticipated, his own valet, the bailiff, and two or three servants had arrived in search of their well-loved master.

“Where is Casey?” he inquired.

The culprit appeared, looking very like a culprit.

“Casey has been of great service to me this evening,” he said, addressing his servants. “An attack was meditated on this

house, and with his assistance it was repulsed. I shall walk home with him. My horse is lame. In the meantime you had better stay here till the morning. But look here, O'Brien," he continued, addressing the bailiff, an intelligent man, "I think the less said of this the better. In the present state of things prevention is better than punishment. Any rumour of this affair will create suspicion and cause ill blood. So just tell your men that the least said the soonest mended."

The men grinned assent. With all their honesty, they would have been loath to draw to their village the attention of the law and its myrmidons.

So, arming himself with his heavy whip, Cuthbert started with the reclaimed Casey.

No sooner were they out of earshot than Cuthbert entered into conversation.

“It’s a pretty business this you’ve been engaged in to-night, my friend ! Are you not thoroughly ashamed of yourself?”

“I am so, your honour.”

“And will you promise never to do anything of the kind in future?”

“I will so, your honour.”

“Just recollect what you’ve been doing. Mr. Slaney gave you a small farm. You made some money ; but you must needs join some secret society, drink, let your wife starve, not pay your rent ; and then, because Mr. Slaney, who is accountable to the landlord, and who has forgiven you fifty times, threatens to turn you out of a place you no longer deserve, you want to destroy his property. I say nothing of the fright you gave to Miss Ida.”

“I should not injure a hair of her darlint head. I should rather cut off both my hands myself.”

"Now, listen to what Mr. Slaney proposed to do for you. He and I were going to ask Father Dennis to tell you that if you promised to mend your ways and to leave off your bad companions, we would lend you some money till you got your affairs a little round."

"Till I got my affairs a little square! Och, your honour, and were you now—ah! I wish I was dead."

"Don't be a fool, Casey! be a man."

"I will so, your honour."

"But what would you have done? You would have spent the money with your precious friends, left your wife to starve, and yourself worse off than before."

"May be I would, your honour. Thim boys, your honour."

"However, that's all past; I shall take away your farm."

“Ah, now, your honour! and would you ruin a poor man?”

“No, I shall save you. What do you think that mighty rascal Master Barney and his friends would do if I left you here? They would burn your ricks if you had any, and you into the bargain probably.”

“Bedad, and they would so.”

“By the way, who are your companions, and where do they come from?”

Casey paused for a moment.

“They come from yonder,” at last he answered. “I do not know their names, your honour.”

“Where do they come from?”

“Up from yonder.”

“From yonder? Indeed! A pretty set of villains yonder must produce. Now, do you promise to behave better for the future, on the honour of a Casey?”

“On the honour of a gentleman, your honour.”

“Well, to-night you are safe. I think we’re enough for the three, are we not?”

“’Faith and your honour’s a match for any baker’s dozen o’ them.”

Cuthbert could not forbear smiling in amusement at the gross flattery.

“Now, attend to what I am going to say. You yourself acknowledge that you have been behaving very badly. If I liked I could give you up to the justices, and they could transport you. You’d be safe at Botany Bay, Casey. But, on condition that you behave well in future, and in consideration of your conduct to Miss Ida, and of her intercession in your favour —”

“And, bedad, what a beautiful couple ye’d make, the pair o’ ye!” muttered

Casey, as though lost in the subject of his soliloquy.

“For these reasons,” continued Cuthbert, endeavouring to appear unconscious of the interruption, “for these reasons I shall send you to England, and provide for you until I can find you some employment. And mark, Casey, that I don’t know whether I shall be doing right. Many men who have always conducted themselves properly would be too glad of such a chance.”

“Owch,” replied Casey, bursting into tears, “may God and the Virgin bless your honour and make ye happy a thousand, thousand times.”

“Come, be a man, and answer my questions.”

Casey was sobbing like a child.

“Do you think your wife and chil-

dren will be safe if they are left behind?"

"Indeed and I do so, your honour. But how can I ever leave poor Biddy and the little ones?"

"You thought little of them before, Casey. You must make up your mind to be separated. It is but fair you should undergo some punishment."

"And indeed it is so, for the good of my soul."

"Father Dennis shall look after them; and when you have found a house for them they shall be brought over to you, wherever you are, at your own expense, Casey."

"Owch!" burst out again the impulsive Irishman, and with such expressions of gratitude and feeling did he wile the way to Bradon.

CHAPTER VII.

JULIUS CÆSAR AGAIN.¹

AT length Cuthbert reached his temporary home. Bidding one of his numerous followers to inform Casey's wife of his safety and of his immediate departure, he desired that father of a family to pass the night at the stable. .

"You will start the first thing to-morrow, Casey. I shall be up. Good-night."

Suppressing his emotions in the presence

of his fellow-countrymen, Casey soon forgot his cares in a luxurious couch, hurriedly constructed with hay on a corn bin. The locked door, the barred windows, and the high stable wall, formed a safe castle of refuge. In this security the clinking chain and the savage howl of a dog were as soft music, to woo slumber to the eyelids of this stricken deer.

Disturbed by his thoughts and the incidents of the evening, Cuthbert proceeded to his sitting-room.

Ida's note was lying on his table. He opened it. It contained but few words, as she had said, a request that he would call in the course of the evening.

Another letter lay near. He opened it. From Father Dennis, he thought. There was no fire, so he did not, as was his custom, burn the envelope. The cover of Ida's note he had, strange to say,

not thrown into the empty grate. It still served its original purpose, lying on the table, with the note itself carefully replaced.

But as he read the second letter his brow contracted, and he bit his lip, more in astonishment than displeasure, at the contents. It ran thus:—

“When I notified to you your grandfather’s legacy, I thought my trust finally discharged—my task completed. Circumstances compel me, however, once more to address you. Your grandfather bade me to watch over your career; I thought it secure when once you had begun life.

“I have but few words to say to you. This I know, that plots are hatching for the destruction of hopes dearest to you. Come while it is time. See with your own eyes. You have pledged yourself. It is your duty to forgive much—even now

to win back an erring heart—or to judge with your own eyes if you will resign it for ever.

“And now in the midst of active times your young voice is required in the councils of your country. Where you are they say you have done much. The journals are teeming with your exertions, and their well deserved success. Come, and in the place conferred on you by your countrymen, give to them the fruits of your experience, advance one more step towards the pedestal which is still far, far distant. You have secured the fortunes of your family. You can spare, if only a few days, to the advancement of your own, and to the prosperity of your country.”

The signature was as illegible as on the former occasion. It resembled the Julius Cæsar to which at Florence the Russian

had likened it. There were the same black undistinguishable strokes.

Cuthbert took the cover from the grate. The round seal bore no impression. He looked at the direction. The paper was white, the direction undefaced. He could discover no stamp or postmark.

He rang the bell. An old servant answered.

"Who brought this letter?" he inquired.

"Is it Miss Ida's letter you mean, sir?"

"No!—another letter I found lying here."

"No letter has come, sir, but Miss Ida's."

"Strange! Has my servant received it?"

"No, sir. He was away all day, sir, in the car about your clothes. He only arrived a few minutes before starting with the bailiff in search of your honour.

He just ate a bit of meat in the pantry, and went out again immediately."

"Has any one been in this room?"

"No one, sir, but Miss Ida, when she writ that bit of a note. I was in the room the whole time, sir—not five minutes."

CHAPTER VIII.

NIGHT HOURS.

CUTHBERT did not retire to rest till a very late hour. He loved living in the night. It was a bad habit perhaps, but one usually adopted by those who have from day to day to devise occupation for their future hours. The silence around, the increased energy of the brain, and the security from interruption, are valuable accessories to mental action of free men.

And this night Cuthbert had much to

consider. Even the man of action must at times look round him to discover the difficulties that beset his path. He will not lose time in revolving plans for the removal of obstacles ; but he will ascertain the real danger of his position, and choose the weapons suited to his skill against every contingency.

Henceforth Cuthbert was to be a man of action. The evening had tried his powers, the morning was to proffer a still more subtle ordeal.

Sitting down, pipe in mouth, he read over to himself the experiences of his residence in Ireland. Fact after fact had he noted down—fact, but little reflection. To his ready mind facts were self-evident arguments, suggesting as they rose to his mind an inevitable commentary.

“Yes,” he said to himself, “the case is strong. No one will be able to resist this

long array." And he panted for the day when once again he should break a lance in the great arena. Then he rapidly committed to paper a few memoranda for the guidance of Slaney, and then he gave himself up to thought.

Yes, in love even the statesman and the soldier may become a dreamer.

The constant occupation of the last few weeks had deadened for a time the strength of his feelings. But now in the still night they returned in all their intensity.

Norah had a hold on his heart far firmer than even he was willing to acknowledge—a hold on his heart, his imagination, and his reason.

His heart dwelt upon her few virtues; his imagination on her many beauties; and his reason—his reason was astray, wandering to Norah.

And yet when reason did return occa-

sionally, it was fertile in attempts at consolation. Why should she not love him? She had told him of her love—why should she not speak the truth? Had she not known him long and intimately? Had he not achieved for himself a position worthy of her love? Did he not love her deeply, intensely? Alas! the arguments were all negative.

The next morning Cuthbert was up betimes. Casey was waiting his commands. He baid him wait a little longer. The agent came.

“Well, Slaney,” he said, “I have made up my mind.”

“And what do you think of the bill?”

“A bad one—a very bad one. I shall oppose it.”

“Then you must start at eleven. Will you give orders?”

“I have done so.”

“And as to Casey?”

“I will take him with me.” Without implicating the erring man, he narrated the incident of the previous evening, imposing however silence and inaction as to aggressive measures.

“You are right, I think. As the Casey matter is settled I will lose no time in ordering horses and seeing about the cottage for Miss Sinclair. Brave girl! The cottage holds but little furniture; she can have those things of mine from the farm. The house wants no repair inside, and I don’t see why she could not sleep there to-night.”

“Thanks, Slaney. You wont stop to breakfast?”

“No, thank you, I shall be off.” Slaney was a bit of a gossip as regarded Mrs. Slaney, and he was longing for an opportunity of proving his gratitude to Ida.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE breakfast was over. Cuthbert, Charles Burton, and the priest, had discussed many things during that short meal. He had told them confidentially of Casey's conduct; and the priest had administered severe rebukes to that unhappy man, with injunctions to good conduct for the future.

At length it was time to depart; and Cuthbert, accompanied by his guests, pro-

ceeded to the door, where stood two cars ready to convey the traveller and Casey to the nearest post town.

The news of his journey had spread like wildfire, and a crowd was assembled to mourn and speed his departure. Twenty men at least were decorating and arranging the harness of his horses, in the vain hope that, attracted by the comeliness of their personal appearance, Cuthbert would volunteer to associate them with the fortunate Casey. The wife and children of that individual were likewise there, wailing and moaning their separation from the chief of their house. Old women were there, blessing and belauding their young benefactor. Maidens dark, blue-eyed maidens, stood in a modest line, thinking, perhaps, of some King Cophetua.

“And ochone! and will your honour

leave us? and what shall we do, what shall we do?" The elderly ladies flocked around him, menacing embraces.

"Ay! what shall we do, what shall we do? And will he desert us?"

Then there ensued a universal dialogue, extolling his virtues and describing in deplorable terms the probable contingencies of his absence.

Father Dennis spoke.

"Be aff with ye, my children," he shouted to his flock, "be aff with ye. Don't ye know as well as I do that the young master's only going up to the Parliament-house to fight your battles, and that he'll be back with ye in a week? Isn't he your best friend? Be aff now, instead of shillooing like dumb animals."

The dumb animals listened to the voice of their shepherd.

"But will your honour come back to

us soon? Oh! your honour, and what shall we do without your darlint face, and free hand?"

"Mr. Slaney will take care of you, my friends, and so will Mr. Burton and Father Dennis. I shall come back as soon as ever I can. Father Dennis will be bail for me."

The rustic population appreciated the legal term, and accepting the security, allowed Cuthbert to drive off in peace.

And as he drove he conversed with Casey, and on the sea he continued the conversation. Many were the tales he learnt from the farmer—tales of woe, of oppression, of misery. He learnt how the poor will help the poor, he learnt how the rich will neglect them. Casey was not uneducated. His late course of life had reduced him to the level, the manners, and the language of the pea-

santry. But, as is often the case, when removed from lowering associations, his whole tone and bearing underwent a sudden and favourable metamorphosis.

“And which of your misfortunes do you consider the hardest, Casey?”

“It is not hunger, your honour. It is not cold, nor sickness, nor poverty. It is that we may work and work and make money for the masters, and that we never see the light of his face nor the shine of his goold, as he spends it far away from us with the Saxon.”

And as, late on the Friday afternoon, Cuthbert drove to the door of a London hotel, he murmured to himself,

“Slaney, after all, was in the right. Wonders can be effected by a name.”

CHAPTER X.

THE DEBATE.

THE night had arrived, and the discussion, which attracted the attention of all England, was to decide the fate of its governors.

The House was crowded at five o'clock. Captious members, with notices of questions, had postponed their arrival to avoid their self-imposed task of interpellation. The great crisis overwhelmed all minor considerations. Claimants were abandoned

whose fortunes were to be decided by a phrase. Truths were for the moment suppressed; falsehoods for the moment allowed to slumber.

The House was crowded. On either side piles of senators, hosts of eager faces, hoards of conflicting passions, were jumbled on the graduated benches. Ladies peered through the grating of their Turkish den, pale and breathless with anxiety. Reporters anxiously turned the blank pages of their note books. Strangers ceased even to inquire the places of the principal leaders. Peers below the bar watched anxiously the shadows of the hour. The clerks shook off their usual apathy. Tapers and Tadpoles even remained immovable in their places—their hurry calmed by the influence of excitement, their usual frolicsome disposition subdued by foreboding or by hope.

At length the moment had arrived, and the leader rose to bring forward his measure. Hesitatingly he opened his case, carefully poising each word, and cautiously advancing his general statements, before entering into the narrow region of detail. Anxiously did his eye wander from bench to bench, from row to row, as one by one he detailed the startling facts, and the well digested statistics, urging him to this act of legislation. He allowed himself but small rhetorical artifice. Well he knew that none amidst that earnest audience had neglected to study the awful truths which demanded their investigation. Fact, fact alone, and clear sound deduction, could enlist the sympathy of English sterling sense. It was not to the heart that the minister addressed his observations. The heart had already spoken; and every British voice had de-

manded the interposition of statesmen. The heart had spoken. The brain was called upon to act.

At length the speaker paused. Then his peroration, rapidly but audibly uttered, betrayed his deep emotion. Carefully and dispassionately had he considered the present state of that unhappy country where he was now called upon to mingle punishment with relief. In his considerations he had conceded no part either to private friendship or partizan polemic—(hear.) Honestly, conscientiously had he weighed every statement, and invited every criticism—(hear.) High and low, far and wide, had he sought for assistance and for scrutiny, for counsel, nay for opposition. Calmly, and with sincere convictions, had he with his colleagues elaborated the present scheme; and earnestly would they recommend it to the adoption of their

country—(cheers.) It was prompted by necessity, founded on reason, and proposed with confidence—(hear.) Without it, or one similar in principle, no government could exist—(hear, and cries of no, no.) Let the government of which he was a member stand or fall, he should ever regard his measures with equal satisfaction—(cheers and counter cheers)—assured by his own conscience, and by the rules of logic, and by the precedents of history, that for existing contingencies he had discovered an expedient, the efficacy of which could be reduced to the certainty of a mathematical calculation—(oh!) The world at large had watched the struggles of the sufferer. The remedy proposed was violent, but sure. He would repress the disease, and stimulate the vitality. So long as invention could be engrafted on experience, so long would

such remedies as were now prescribed be enforced by disorders such as were now witnessed.

He resumed his seat amidst applause. The Ministerial benches were enthusiastic in their demonstration. The Opposition was silent. A smile of satisfaction for a moment spread over the minister's countenance. Was it the precursor of success? So at least thought the owner of one voice, which amidst the noise was raised pre-eminent. Lord Elmwood, pale, nay ghastly, sat below the bar. He raised his eyes in the direction of the voice. In the enthusiast, the peer recognized the features of Sir Hugh Dawnay.

A bitter smile came over those ashy lips, as Lord Elmwood bent his ear to the next speaker.

He was an Irishman. Small in stature, and with a weak, shrill voice, he possessed but few of those characteristics

so powerful as adjuncts to eloquence. Neither had he the tongue of a ready speaker. The pen Cicero declares to be the best guide for an orator. To the pen was this orator entirely beholden for his discourses, carefully elaborated in the closet, and smacking of the lamp even at the height of excited recitation.

From remote times Mr. Shanty traced the origin of Irish tribulation.

His tropes were poetical, his argumentation nervous. Gradually he followed the course of ages, the policies and the faults of statesmen. In these lay the real history of the misery cast over his country, like the shroud of a desolating Cyclops. Far and wide the misery of a people proclaimed the blunders of a government. And was a high-hearted nation, capable of great deeds, to be stigmatized by a minister as a horde of assassins? Because a few uneducated peasants, delirious from the

distress they were unable to alleviate, sought a futile remedy in the perpetration of a crime, was a kingdom to be involved in the punishment of felons?—(hear.) But who were mortal men to punish crimes such as these, originating under such exceptional circumstances?—(cheers.) Who could tell to what course extremities might reduce the best and wisest. Nay, even the right honourable gentleman himself, if stripped of all that made life dear to him, might be tempted to become a Whiteboy—(cheers, laughter, and cries of order.) Heaven forbid that he (the right honourable gentleman) should ever suffer the misfortune and the grief he was about to inflict upon unfortunate Ireland. But he (the orator) was assured that his (the minister's) manner would not be so calm, nor his mind so collected, if Disease unaided by physicians, should chase

the roses from that delicate complexion, should Famine reduce the redundancy of that manly form, and render spare that which was now ample and rotund—(laughter.) True, according to modern legislation, pauperism was an offence not worthy even of a felon's prison. True, the robber and the murderer were pampered in their luxurious cells, while the meed of the pauper was blows, his diet offal and crushed bones.

Such indeed had been the legislation of the right honourable gentleman. Such was the system of rewards and punishments embodied in his (the right honourable gentleman's) social code. But he had yet to learn, that this system could be extended to a nation—even to that poor, degraded, vilified nation to which he (the orator) had the honour to belong. And so long as he had a voice in the assem-

bly, he should protest against such dastardly expedients, the contemptible offspring of ignoble minds—(cheers from his colleagues.) No; he looked for actions far more exalted, and projects infinitely more extended. Even in the desert of that dire affliction which bespread his well-loved native land he saw a fountain springing. He trusted to the courage of his countrymen, to the justice of strangers, to turn that affliction to good account—not only to remedy the past and the present, but to provide for the eternal future—a future when the Halcyon of peace should circle over his native island with healing in her wings — a future when the proletariat should cease to starve, the miscreant to miscreate — proletaries however lowly, miscreants however exalted. For these reasons Mr. Shanty would oppose the measure.

The cataract was exhausted, and the orator, amidst the uproar of his compatriots and the more moderate expressions of sympathy from the Opposition, resumed his seat.

Then rose a baronet of large fortune, who, from his dullness and incapacity, was known as an independent member. He secretly aspired to a seat in the Upper House, and placemen in place extolled his sagacity, inasmuch as it was the melancholy development of his independence and his judgment to support every administration in its worst moments.

Urged by his sad fate that morning, he had listened to the voice of the charmer in the shape of a dapper secretary, the Sir Pandarus of representative institutions. A judicious hint, and an inquiry as to the name of his post-town, had

pierced far into the heart of Sir Bootle Renton. One respectable dullard conciliates many of his species, and the turgid stream of his Beotian eloquence offered an admirable contrast to the fiery efforts of his immediate predecessor. And while

“Ductile dullness new meanders takes,”
and

“Attentive blocks stand round him and admire,”
the drift of his sluggish fluency is in favour of the measure; and Opposition minds, awed by so much respectability, tremble at the prospect of approaching defeat.

At length his course was run, and an Opposition leader rose to reply.

His exordium was quiet and sensible. It might have been spoken by the minister. He, too, has formed a dispassionate judgment, and has dismissed every considera-

tion not founded on the purest patriotism or directed towards a removal of present and future disasters. Such sentiments he was glad to share with the right honourable gentleman on the Treasury bench. And as he gave to that right honourable gentleman all credit for the purity of his motives, so he should claim from the right honourable member a reciprocity of justice even while giving to the measure before the House an uncompromising opposition—(hear.)

But while he paid that tribute—while he was ready to admit and even proclaim this honesty of purpose, which, with lucidity of intellect and readiness of conception, was combined in the person of the right honourable gentleman—he must acknowledge himself at a loss to discover by what process of reasoning a statesman endowed with such invaluable qualities

could have considered himself justified in bringing forward a proposition such as the one now under the consideration of the House—a proposition wherein, to use the words of Dr. Johnson, “everything was unnatural and nothing was new”—(hear and laughter.)

He then proceeded carefully to canvass each clause and each proposition with a close and searching analysis. The measure, bad as it was, had been drawn up with great apparent care, and under searching supervision. No principle, however astounding to morality and good government, but was expressed in the choicest and most accurate phraseology—(hear, hear, hear.) No provision, however monstrous, but had received all the finish of lawyers and refinement of casuists—(hear.) The minister was jus-

tified in his declaration. The minister had evidently bestowed on this wonderful piece of legislation his most elaborate attention—(cheers.) It was evidently the fruit of long and painful forethought—of discussion in the cabinet—of deliberation in the hours of repose. And on this issue he would found a charge against the administration. Heretofore he had considered it impossible to find in any body of men such an unanimity of perversion. In his own opinion, in the opinion he was convinced of the House, and in the opinion of the country, a body of men—men arrived at more than years of discretion—who could thus offer to the world, as the result of their united labour, a measure the puerility and futility of which was equalled only by its malicious and mischievous tendency, could be considered

no longer worthy to control the councils of their sovereign, or to conduct the government of a great empire.

Loud, long, and ringing were the cheers of the Opposition, as their leader once more retreated to their ranks. A slight colour came to the cheek of Lord Elmwood. He looked towards Dawnay. That man of the world was anxiously gnawing his nails. Burney was sitting not far from him, likewise anxious, but more composed. Lord Elmwood would have given the world to speak to him; but Burney having exchanged a few words with the peer in the course of the evening, studiously avoided any further conversation. He was anxious and undecided as to the vote he should give. He was consequently averse to any discussion with so decided a partisan as Lord Elmwood. He disliked the ministerial proposition; and he had a

personal leaning towards Lord Elmwood, which he dreaded might still more influence his decision in favour of the Opposition. But at the same time he felt the urgent necessity of legislative action ; and he was apprehensive lest the delay consequent on a Ministerial defeat should prove more injurious than the enactment of a defective law. Hitherto he had heard no argument sufficiently forcible to carry conviction. His was not a mind to be influenced by satire or generalities. The criticism of the Opposition leader had certainly gone far to efface the impressions left by the speech of the minister. But as yet the Opposition had strictly limited themselves to the exercise of their obstructive vocation. They had brought forward no counter proposition. The Government measure might be greatly and beneficially modified in committee. At any rate it was a sub-

stantive proposition and basis. The Opposition in power must begin *de novo*, and even then their scheme might be equally objectionable.

Meanwhile a speaker rose from his seat on the Treasury bench—one of those safe men on a par with Sir Bootle Renton; but somewhat superior, as having endeavoured to cultivate that small share of mind allotted to him, and the effort itself having been productive of certain small results.

Mr. Masterton was evidently designed by nature for a subordinate position—a man ready at a moment's notice to accept or vacate any specified office, without increasing or diminishing the strength of a ministry. He was able and energetic as a workman; a fluent though somewhat dreary speaker; well-looking, gentleman-like, and imposing; a firm believer in

the infallibility of his party, and the transcendent merits of their supporters. Having filled the highest offices, he could leave no single trace, bad or good, of his career ; and his name dying out with his contemporaries, would be mentioned neither in pride nor blame by his posterity. He resembled, in fact, one of those arches in the Alhambra, constructed of plaster, but on mathematical principles, which consequently, with all the appearance of solidity, are merely ornamental devices, to cover the solid beam that supports the edifice.

Mr. Masterton was an adept in the art of rebuke. His noble presence lent weight to his words, as well as the slow delivery, resembling, to use a borrowed simile, the firing of minute guns.

The Government were in a dilemma. Other speeches were in the background.

The house had begun to be clamorous for a division; and Ministers did not wish to divide at that moment, nor to expend their ammunition, reserving it for any further attack.

Urged by an adverse fate, Mr. Masterton was therefore put forward to administer a rebuke.

Slowly rising, and depositing his hat, he proceeded after his own peculiar fashion.

Invoking the manes of a departed statesman, who would not have behaved like the Opposition leader, Mr. Masterton bade his opponents to reflect. The right honourable baronet opposite had declared his full appreciation of the motives which had actuated the Government. And yet he had criticised their measure in terms that could admit but of one interpretation—(cheers from the Opposition.) Was that

noble—nay, was it generous? He, Mr. Masterton, had asked himself the question. Frankly and honestly, laying his hand on his breast, he could answer in the negative—(oh!) The right honourable gentleman, the papers had stated, was only just returned from the continent. The words of the Latin poet were surely applicable to his case:—

“Cœlum non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt.”

For his part, he could honestly declare, laying his hand on his heart, that he could not for all the world have made such a speech as that of the right honourable baronet—(cheering from Mr. Shanty and his friends, ironical and uproarious.)

So far so good. The rebuke had been severe; the quotation novel. A rapid interchange of words between the principal Ministerial leaders had suggested a new and not impracticable course of parlia-

mentary tactics. But their adverse fate had already urged them to a course which proved suicidal.

Mr. Masterton had heard the despairing words of his colleagues. Himself an Irish proprietor, he had mastered all the details; and having a retentive memory, he recollected all the principal arguments urged at different times on the consideration of the Cabinet. Of late he had become penetrated by a sense of his own importance, not a little increased by the unexpected demand for an oratorical display.

As a matter of course, his mind was of a somewhat ambitious turn. Prompted therefore by an unfortunate inspiration, Mr. Masterton determined to erect himself into a *Deus ex machinâ*, the complication being worthy of such a solution. With this intent he remained standing at

the conclusion of his reproof, and refreshing himself with a glass of water he proceeded.

By a quick instinct the adverse chief divined the truth of the situation.

With a rapid whisper to his neighbours, he bent forward in an attitude of attention, his party almost simultaneously adopting the gesture of their commander. The action produced the desired effect. Flattered and encouraged, Mr. Masterton resumed.

Gradually, and not without some rhetorical art, he laid bare all the secret working of the Cabinet. One by one he unfolded the arguments stored up with such care by his superiors; but by the same fatality, dwelling on the repressive rather than on the benevolent portion of their policy.

“As clocks run fastest when most lead is on,”

so did the Right Honourable Masterton hurry on his headlong course, fearful of a check ere he had exhausted his ill-gotten stores.

He was standing too far in advance for any covert signal. A long-legged lord of the Treasury, by order of his chief, had more than once endeavoured to stretch himself into a proximity of admonition. But all was vain. The Ministerial leaders turning on each other a long, last look of despairing, thrust their hats over their eyes, and folding their arms, calmly awaited their inexorable destiny.

At length the speaker had come to an end. The outside followers, unequal to the occasion, gave a faint and sickly cheer. Their admiration, thought the speaker, was too big for words. Radiant with pride he turned to his place, and looked on either side for gratitude and gratulation.

A gentleman sat next him acute in mind, but rough in phraseology.

“Well,” he observed to a neighbour, “other people may say what they like of Masterton’s speech; but this I will declare, that though many in this world have made —— fools of themselves, our dear Masterton has beaten them, out and out.”

But there was not much time for parley. The Ministers heard a cry of order. It was followed by a deep silence. Lord Elmwood looked round for the new speaker, who was standing on the Opposition benches, and then walked to the other side of the space reserved for peers. Standing near one of the columns supporting the gallery, he perceived his nephew Cuthbert.

Lord Elmwood held his breath. With the whole house he felt how much de-

pended on the voice of that young man. Grasping the bench before him, he leant forward, the better to listen. Strange! he had not seen his nephew previously. Cuthbert had purposely avoided conversation. His brain was in a whirl. He had occupied a remote corner of the gallery, to gather his thoughts, and listen to the speeches, until during Mr. Masterton's play he had entered the house by a side door, near which he had taken up his position.

Never was a speech opened under less favourable circumstances. The young speaker seemed jaded and worn ere he commenced. Some might have thought it presumptuous in so young a member to rise at so late an hour—past eleven. His sequestered place was inconvenient for speaking. Everything seemed to militate against his success. But a few perceived

the sparkle of his eye, and the resolute though tremulous movement of his lip. Dawnay scrutinized him in doubt—Burney in hope. Both Ministers and Opposition felt the value of such an ally. All were hushed to listen.

He began slowly and apologetically. He excused himself for intruding at so late a period of the evening on the attention of the House. Under no other circumstances would he have ventured on such a proceeding.

But this had been the only opportunity during the course of the debate. He had only arrived during the last few hours from the venue of future legislation. During his stay some facilities had been afforded to him, and facts supplied which he could not feel justified, from any false delicacy, in

withholding at such a crisis from the notice of the House.

A buzz of encouragement ran round. Either party anticipated with satisfaction this addition to their forces.

Cuthbert continued. Before entering on the present state of things he rapidly reviewed the precedent history of the existing crime and distress. Causes should actuate the legislator far more than the results. The principal portion of such a bill should be the preamble. The root of the evil was apparent. The soil was fertile, and capable of cultivation. The project of a statesman should be one of renovation. The scheme now proposed was a scheme of destruction—(loud and protracted cheering.)

Carefully he laid bare all the mistakes and misapprehensions that had induced ignorant statesmen to pursue an obnoxious

policy. And while he touched on the distress and crime, although he neither diminished nor exaggerated the reality of either, he sketched in glowing terms the good qualities of the suffering nation, and showed how the removal of the first disorder would involve the eradication of the second.

Never in the history of a country could a finer opportunity be presented for the display of a master mind. The occasion was one of those that make men.

Then he recorded instances of self-devotion, of heroism, in the walks of peasant life, unrivalled in the pages of romance or reality. He showed how, in those portions of the kingdom where landlords had remained in their natural position, surrounded by their tenantry and dispensing those gifts which in England were so well

recognized as no longer to attract observation, the peace had been undisturbed; and the peasantry, looking only for their due, had remained contented and loyal. He showed further, that in other parts where such a course had been followed, not preventively but remedially, the cure had taken good effect; and the people, acting on the impulse of good hearts, had accepted the tardy concession, and forgetting and forgiving past neglect, hastened their return to the path of sobriety and order—(cheers.)

One instance had within a few days fallen under his personal notice. And suppressing the names of place and person, he told the story of Casey's night adventure, distinguishing the labourer embittered by misfortune from his companions the professional outlaws. "And as to the latter," he continued, "what country is

not cursed by the presence of some such criminals? Are we to mix in a common punishment the ruffian steeped in vice from his birth, and the famished labourer who lays his hands on a sheep to provide food for a starving family, or who, goaded to despair by the wilful neglect of his superiors, seeks, when no longer in control of his reason, to wreak a despairing vengeance on those whose callousness and neglect have paralysed his manly arm, or brought his children to the grave. No! In every country the 'law inflicteth sharpe punishment to misdoers.' In England the existing laws are sufficient for our criminals. In Ireland they will be found equal to their task—(cheers from Mr. Shanty.) The present is a time for mercy, not for wrath. We have been the principal cause of these disasters; we should suffer, we should share the punishment.

While thousands are dying around us, while the flowers of our armies and our labour is wasting away, it is not the moment for us to act the part of destroyers. Destruction is dealt by a Power far higher than that of man, dealt out with no sparing hand. Whatever may have been the cause, whoever may have been the origin of our present affliction, the common danger should be expelled by sympathy, not by fear—by benevolence, not by coercion. The laws, I say, as safeguards, are sufficient. Use force, and you will stir up an undying enemy. The sense of injury not yet obliterated will be revived from generation to generation. It will be told how in the time of famine and of disease the sword was brought to complete the frightful havoc. Other means lie within your grasp. Let the legends

for posterity be those of peace, not of slaughter. At any cost, at any sacrifice, let us show our desire, and prove our will, to alleviate sufferings that defy imagination. And by exciting the gratitude of a devoted and sensitive people, from the wrecks around us we can regenerate a nation, healthy and strong as heretofore, ready to till our ground, and burning to fight our battles."

Such is the meagre account of a speech that carried a division. The young orator, warming as he proceeded, excited by his contending thoughts, by his own griefs, nay, even by his fatigue, poured forth his words with an energy of which he had heretofore deemed himself incapable.

As one by one he delivered his arguments and illustrations, the house listened in silence to one who, evidently master of

his subject, endeavoured to impress upon his hearers truths supported by a sound head and a sound reason.

A country is at its highest when party feeling runs strongest. But even when party feeling runs strongest, there are moments when Englishmen will forget such secondary ties, and, guided by their own impulse, will pursue a course which no human power can alter.

Is there one amongst our many millions who, even for eternal power, would assist by a breath the triumph of an enemy, would rejoice at our repulse even in a skirmish, or without dismay would for a moment behold a stranger's flag victorious?

And at such a crisis but few could follow a course unsupported by conviction. Nature spoke, and her children obeyed the summons. Some steeled by

habit voted conscientiously against their conscience, deferring their own judgment to that of men proved capable of great and wise actions. But the majority voted on the side of humanity. And humanity was on the side of the Opposition.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH.

THE division was over, and nothing now remained but the formal business of the House. Cuthbert walked slowly with Burney towards the bar where Lord Elmwood was sitting, apparently immersed in thought.

Yes, power was within his grasp. His hopes were achieved by one whose fortunes he had endeavoured to destroy, whose affection he had for ever blighted. He

was ghastly pale, that scheming Earl. Yet his thoughts turned but little on his triumph. His life, his power, he inly swore, should be devoted to that boy, so noble, so deeply injured. Crowds of flatterers and placehunters were around him, courting him whose fortunes were in the ascendant. But he heeded little their fawning and their felicitations. Intently he watched the approach of his nephew, now the all-powerful, and of his nephew's friend, so infinitely smaller, but to obtain whom so much had been sacrificed. They were often interrupted by those who befriended the prosperous. At length they neared the bar, and the smiling crowd separated to watch the interview. Cuthbert started in horror at the pale and haggard countenance.

"Cuthbert," exclaimed the peer faintly,

“Cuthbert, my dear boy, bo—” But his tongue refused its office.

He wished to grasp the young man’s hand. But his own hung helpless by his side. He tried to rise. But he fell forward into the arms of the two young men.

“It will be better to leave him,” said a bystander. “I will run and see if his carriage is ready.”

And the rest walked to the cloak room to tell how Lord Elmwood’s course was over.

Yes, in the hour of triumph the statesman’s career was finished. He was not dead, but death had struck the first blow. The second might come at any moment—and then the third—and then the strength of the mighty passeth away, and his place knoweth him no more.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOVER.

THE next day was a busy one for Cuthbert. His first visit was to the house of lamentation. Lord Elmwood was sleeping. It was a good sign, the doctors said; and his Lordship might be restored to partial health. But never again was he to be subjected to excitement. Country, nay, even town amusements, might be permitted; but politics

would be his death. Hitherto they had been his life.

“Oh! Cuthbert,” exclaimed Edith, when they were alone, “how sincerely I thank you. Poor papa’s only words have been to bless you, and I am sure that from Ireland blessings are sent over to you at every hour of the day.”

“I hope so, Edith. God knows I require them.”

“Cuthbert! Cuthbert! pray, do not despond! You have youth, health, and fame. Look at papa! When he recovers his consciousness, do you not think he would give his right hand for a fiftieth part of your advantages?”

Her voice faltered, and her eye was bent reproachfully on her cousin. In that house of mourning it was not for him to grieve or complain.

He changed the subject:

"Tell me, Edith, something of Lady Beaconsfield and of——Norah."

"Yes, I must not keep you any longer from Fulham. It is time, dear Cuthbert, you should go there. Norah is hurt at your sudden departure. Your arrival I am sure will win her back to you."

"If she was hurt at my departure, my return will have but little effect."

"They leave town in a day or two for Burnholme, where Edward is to be married. You must go with them."

"No, Edith. My place is in Ireland, at Bradon. Either Norah will return with me, or she will go to Burnholme, with Lady Beaconsfield—alone."

Edith looked at her cousin curiously. His lips were firmly closed, and his eye showed no symptom of relenting.

"You had better go, Cuthbert." Edith sighed as she spoke. Was it a sigh of grief, or of hope?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOVER'S WALK.

CUTHBERT walked to Fulham. Hardened as had become his nature, he required some time for reflection. As he walked the present was banished from his thoughts, which wandered to the past. He remembered all his early love for Norah. He remembered how that love had ripened and increased; how his heart dwelt fondly on her image; how her accents thrilled his frame, and could once

turn him from any pastime, nay, from any occupation. Occasionally he recalled some less pleasing phases of her character. He recollected the period of her father's death—the frivolity scarce tempered by the sad event. He thought of the many hours spent by Lady Beaconsfield in solitude, while her daughter was seeking for distraction anywhere but in the sick-room of her mother. And gradually such recollections grew stronger and more predominant, as they approached later days. He remembered how she had tampered and trifled with his feelings, by tampering and trifling with the feelings of others. Their mutual promises had never been made public, so none considered it incumbent to abstain from wooing her affections. And Norah had never appeared to withhold her sanction. Cuthbert had long seen that Burney, one of his nearest

friends, had not passed unscathed from his contact with the wild girl of the laughing eyes. He had watched every movement of his unconscious rival. His view was rendered acute by his own affection, and he could not overlook the well-known diagnostics.

At her approach the cynic phrase of Burney had been turned into the blandest philanthropy. The smile educated into bitterness, had resumed its natural kindness when directed towards Norah. The pale cheek flushed at her appearance. And when the two friends were arm-in-arm, Cuthbert had felt the beating of his companion's heart as she passed them.

All this Cuthbert had seen and noted. Yet as he was engaged in studying man, he had omitted to study woman. His truth, his fidelity to Norah, deprived him of the opportunity. And as he learnt that in

men, however corrupt, there is generally some principle of honour, which, while admitting a certain licence of stratagem, generally precludes actual falsehood or treachery; so he thought to judge the softer sex by the same rules, and fondly believed the treachery of woman subject to the same considerations, and confined within the same limits. He did not yet know that nothing can exceed the love, the hate, the devotion, or the falsehood of a woman.

So trusting to the pledges of affection periodically renewed, he had laboured at the task, looking to Norah as his reward. He thought to woo with deeds, not words. But Norah loved the semblance, and was careless of the reality. While Cuthbert tilled and planted, others offered flowers to his goddess. And the goddess smiled on the transitory offering and abandoned

the worshipper who tilled and planted for a more lasting harvest.

More than once had the thought flashed across his mind, that Norah was not fitted to make him happy. More than once had he been mortified at the pleasure she displayed in the society of those whose thoughts were circumscribed by the music of a waltz or the art of a tailor. More than once had he envied, he, the man of eloquence, the lively fluency that carried the mites of society through space, now glittering in a ray, now confounded in the cloud of their fellows.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUBLIONS NOUS.

AT length Cuthbert reached the villa. His heart beating, he walked quietly through a side wicket over the lawn that bordered on the river. His heart beating indeed; for, despite his reasoning and his resolution, he still felt that his deep love held no unimportant place in his moral system. He went steeled for the worst; but yet his armour was not very tightly laced—a little would suffice to loosen it

altogether. He was prepared to sever those ties which for years had sustained him. Nevertheless, in his innermost soul the sanguine element was not entirely extinguished. Happy would he be if, returning on his road, he should know those ties re-established and secured for ever.

The door was open, and without a word he walked into Norah's boudoir. She was not alone. Julia and Lord Beaconsfield were sitting in a corner cooing. Norah was at her piano, and Burney was turning the leaves of her music-book.

He was evidently speaking to her earnestly. Occasionally her fingers struck a few chords for form's sake, though indeed but little deception was necessary in respect to their infatuated companions.

All moved at Cuthbert's approach save Norah. Beaconsfield welcomed him with

a cheery smile, echoed as it were by the sympathetic Julia.

Burney coloured and appeared embarrassed. But Norah, completely self-possessed, held out her lily hand, and scarce turning on the music stool said, "How d'ye do, Cuthbert?"

Cuthbert was not prepared to answer. Dropping hastily the impassive hand, he seated himself near the lovers.

"I am so glad to see you again, old Cuddie. We must have a long talk. Of course you are going to dine here."

"Mr. Burney, you will dine here," interrupted Norah.

"Why, really," he began, —

"Yes, you will," she rejoined with a smile—a smile on her lips. In her eye there was a look of firm significance, the look of command.

"Well, then, I must at any rate send

my groom to London with a message," answered the invited guest, anxious to leave the room and to regain his composure, ruffled by the little incident.

Julia and Beaconsfield seemed inclined to stroll on the sward, but Norah still remained at her piano. In truth she was as uneasy as any of the little party, but she had a woman's power of self-command. Yet the chords she struck were not near so decided.

Cuthbert approached her.

"Norah," he began, "how long have you been on such intimate terms with Burney?"

"And how long have I been accountable to you for my friendships?"

"Not long, Norah—nearly five years. Perhaps you would wish me to recall some passages in which you informed me that none of your actions should ever meet my disapproval."

“ Perhaps you would like to make use of my letters in some other manner. However, I am prepared. Mr. Burney already knows the gist of them.”

A terrible flush came to Cuthbert's forehead, and a terrible gleam to his eyes. For a second and almost perceptibly he clenched his lips.

“ Then am I to understand that your relations with Burney have warranted such confidence ?”

“ They have.”

“ And pray, may I ask”——

“ I have no explanations to make, and you have no right to require them. Look at your own conduct if you require a justification of mine. Perhaps—but it is too late to talk over such matters. Let us still be friends, Cuthbert. Here comes Mr. Burney.”

She would have shaken hands with

Cuthbert, as she heard him heave a deep sigh. It sounded strange. Was it of sorrow or of relief? She placed her hands on the key board, and ran over the refrain of an air well known to Cuthbert. It was arranged to some words he had altered and adapted from a French song, picked up unconsciously at Florence, and in its original shape not quite fitted for English ears. Cuthbert smiled as he heard it. The intention was manifest. The refrain was directed to him, though the context was not remarkably apt. Cuthbert smiled again. Norah for a moment glanced at him. The smile was not one of bitterness—nor, to say the truth, at all melancholy in expression. He had learnt enough of life to avoid the character of the love-lorn. So Norah's heart relented for a moment.

“What a pretty air!” said Lord Bea-

consfield, who with Julia had returned almost simultaneously with Burney. "I think I recollect it at Florence. Do sing it, Norah."

Julia would fain have prevented her lover. Though endowed with but little acuteness, she had divined the real state of affairs. But it was too late. Norah hurried over the prelude, and commenced the first stanza:—

"Ah! yes, we must forget! By you the words are
spoken.

Yet, lady, you are fair! How can I cease to love?
Go, bend your woman's ear where brighter smiles
betoken—

Soft accents, better fram'd your woman's heart to
move.

Go, lady. Life for you hath spread her fairest
flow'rs.

Joys, joys bestrew your path—you cannot know
regret.

Tears, bitter tears for me, the tears of sadden'd
hours.

Ah! yes, we must forget! Ah! yes, we must forget!

Ah! true, we must forget! Perchance when years
are over,

At some resplendent feast, you, lady, you may see
A form ag'd, bent with care, and say, 'Is that my
lover.

I bid him to forget. Those furrows are for me.'

Ah! yes, we must forget—those hours of joy
and gladness.

Gone, past—for ever flown, those happy hours—
and yet—

At some no distant day, some lonely day of
sadness,

You'll think 'Mine were those words, those
words 'We must forget.''"

The air was very melancholy; and notwithstanding all Cuthbert's efforts, he could not resist the effect of the mournful refrain. Yes, those words he had written full of love, burning with ambition, a long untasted life before him, when no cloud beset his path, when obstacles were erected only to be surmounted or overthrown. And through that path he had

hurried, careless, unchecked by thought. For a short space the sun of fortune had smiled on him. Secure in those smiles, she had erected for him a barrier that no art could surmount, no energy destroy. He must turn from the straight course, and leave the past to oblivion.

His heart was desolate, uncheered by the prospect of a home, or a partner in his glories. Those eyes should never again shed on him those beams of love. No more should those lips smile that smile of love and of encouragement which, present or absent, had shone upon his secret soul, and urged him to deeds beyond his natural strength.

No more should he look to that small white hand as the guerdon of his toils, nor encircle that fairy waist, nor move those flowing locks, nor kiss that marble forehead. No more should that singing voice reserve

for him those special accents, those melodious tones, formed but for one word—a word spoken but to one.

No. The poetry of his life has passed away. The vintage must be gathered, but without music; the harvest must be garnered but without a song. Victory must be the reward of the victor. No garland henceforth can adorn his brow.

And yet the world had taught him to play a part. Turning to his friends, he begged them to follow him to the garden. He seemed full of spirits. As the hours passed the little party sat listening to his words, while, without an effort, he told them tales of Irish life, now with pathos, now with humour: at times, the tale of a beggared home, besieged by Death and his thousand weapons; at others, of a hedge oration, a market row, or the flattering prayer of a professional mendicant. Nothing seemed

to come amiss. His audience, forgetting their own thoughts and their own fortunes, hung on his words, and the images that rapidly chased one another during the hours of that bright August day.

He developed powers unknown hitherto even to himself; and none could guess the cause of his unwonted merriment. Yes, one had divined it. Lady Beaconsfield, sitting in her corner. At times she could not resist the infection, and she laughed and cried with the best of them. But when he left, she kissed him on his forehead, and blessed him; and bade her son for once to leave his betrothed and to walk home with Cuthbert.

And Norah? As Cuthbert left, | he thought he felt a slight pressure from her hand, that he caught a hopeful glance from that eye. But it was too late. The tie was severed, and could never be

united. Not for him was the heart that could repel devotion, and soften to neglect.

des Yet that night there was another being Cuthbert who sought in vain for calmness and rest in the dark hours.

CHAPTER XV.

GOOD NIGHT.

THE two friends walked home together, loving each other confidingly as boys, esteeming each other as men.

“Cuddie,” said the young Earl, “you have never spoken to me much about Norah; but I must say that in my opinion the sooner you cut that connection the better. She’s a good sister, but depend

upon it she will not make a good wife."

And Cuthbert for the moment had cast off all the artifice of his manhood. He spoke to his cousin with the frankness, the tenderness, the emotion of his boyhood.

"Let Norah choose for herself, Edward. I make no remonstrance, no threat. If she be happier with another, God forbid that she should marry me on the strength of an old promise. I would not destroy her happiness ; nor, Edward, accept a reluctant gift."

When Cuthbert retired to his room, he thought over his parting words with Norah.

"Good night, Norah."

"Good night, Cuthbert."

They had said no more. And as,

towards morning, he fell into an uneasy slumber, a voice constantly repeated in his ar—

“ Good night, Cuthbert.”

CHAPTER XVI.

HIGH AND LOW.

THE day had past. Lord Elmwood's illness was no longer a novelty. Norah's marriage shared the same fate. And the ministry was almost formed.

As it was natural to expect, Cuthbert had been invited to join the new combination. A post of no inconsiderable importance had been offered to the young orator, whose eloquence had contributed

so much to the success of his uncle's party, and whose assistance henceforth would form a powerful addition to the forces of any administration.

But Cuthbert coveted but little the empty honours and the sacrificed independence of a junior office. Other duties, in his eyes more important, required his immediate attention. Lord Elmwood was ill, and incapable of exertion. Cuthbert thought it more than ever incumbent on him to complete the task he had so successfully begun, devoting his whole undivided energies to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in a country which had worked insensibly into his affections.

So briefly, and with thanks, he declined the minister's flattering offer. And Lord Elmwood, when he heard afterwards how much the youth had resigne

in favour of one who had so literally wronged him, bade his wife kneel by his bedside, and pray forgiveness for themselves, and prosperity for their kinsman.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SOW'S EAR.

NEVERTHELESS Cuthbert was detained in London for some time beyond his original intention. His uncle's illness caused many matters of business to devolve on the young man. Lady Elmwood, engrossed by attendance on her husband, trusted to Cuthbert for the transaction of all the family affairs; and although Edith's earnest, acute mind was capable of much, there are occasions

which render indispensable the interference and the presence of a man.

And in addition to these demands on his time and services, the new ministry had requested him to prolong his stay in London till the completion of their arrangements. His recent experience of Ireland, enhanced in value by the interest he felt in the subject, rendered his advice and co-operation of essential service. An acute minister was but too desirous to profit by so much energy and intelligence. Cuthbert's anxiety was solely the attainment of a certain end. For this he worked assiduously ; and this object accomplished, he without a pang relinquished into the hands of a feeble statesman all the credit and the fame derived from his exertions. And during these proceedings much benefit was derived

from the experiences of Casey. Away from his native country, that once disaffected subject came out in strong colours. He had travelled much through the different provinces of Ireland; and a natural aptitude for comparison, enabled him to afford much useful information as to the qualities and requirements of different localities. His education was likewise, for one of his class, not deficient. He could read, write, and keep accounts. And Cuthbert, while he reaped a reward scarcely unworthy of his kindness, felt an increasing curiosity in the follower he had so unexpectedly become connected with his fortunes.

Having more than once satisfactorily applied a test to the accuracy of Casey's statements, Cuthbert did not hesitate to apply to him for matters of detail, nay

almost to consult him in the preparation of memoranda, so earnestly demanded by the new minister.

Daily did Casey rise in the estimation of his young master by the exhibition of qualities hitherto concealed under his rustic habits. In the air of towns Casey had become almost a townsman. His former position of farmer entitled him to an equality with the upper servants of Lord Beaconsfield's household ; and clothed by Cuthbert's kindness in suitable garb, Casey of a surety far outshone that respectable fraternity.

But while Casey rendered to Cuthbert services similar to those rendered by Cuthbert to the minister, there was a marked difference between the conduct of the statesman and that of the intermediate patron. Cuthbert had not as yet attained that full mental development

which 'teaches the great to flourish on the unacknowledged wits of the small. Casey's past history and present services had been fully revealed to the minister, who was parsimonious neither in actual donations, nor prospective engagements.

One evening as Cuthbert was bringing to a conclusion a long conversation, he announced to his follower a handsome donation on the part of the Government.

"I have received fifty pounds on your account, Casey," he said. "Would you like me to invest for you, or shall I give you the whole sum?"

"Why, thank your honour, I should like to pay his lordship the trifle I owe him, and beg your honour to keep the rest for the wife and children."

"I am glad to hear your decision. To tell you the truth, I expected as much of you. You know I have arranged with

Lord Beaconsfield that you should remain in this house until some arrangement can be made for your employment elsewhere. I shall consequently pay Mr. Slaney twelve pound ten out of the fifty you owe him for Lord Elmwood. I think that a fair proportion of your profits. I have undertaken to provide at present for your family, and I shall find some means of laying out the remainder in some good investment."

"I shall never be able to thank your honour. Oh! if all landlords were like your honour old Ireland would be a very different country."

"Meanwhile," continued Cuthbert, affected by the interruption, to which he endeavoured to appear insensible—"meanwhile you may be of use in London. Mr. Montresor" (the minister) "will find some

employment for you, and I shall occasionally correspond with you. When you are no longer wanted I dare say you will find some occupation in England, or, if you want to make a fortune, you might do well to go for a few years to one of our colonies."

"Perhaps so. Yes, sir, my own behaviour has brought its own punishment. I dare say I shall never live to see old Ireland again."

Casey tried to speak in a light and almost laughing tone; but a tear glittered in his eye as he thus bade farewell to the house of his childhood, and his household Gods.

"Well, Casey, you must hope for the best. Recollect how easily you have escaped the consequences of your folly. You cannot expect everything in this world to

answer your wishes, especially when you have not gone the right way to work. Nay, to me it appears that you are singularly fortunate. Had you remained a small farmer in Ireland your children would probably have been totally uneducated, and would have belonged to a class inferior to your own. As it is you may bring them up to opulence. Many great men have sprung from much smaller beginnings."

"That's true, sir." Casey had almost abandoned his Irish idioms.

"As it is you know Miss Sinclair has taken them to her house, and is educating them herself."

"Bless her, sir! May God bless her eternally, and make her as happy as she deserves! She has always been the same; and I've known her since she was a year old."

“Indeed, Casey ! You surprise me. I never heard this before.”

“No, sir ? I thought Father Dennis had told you my history.”

“No. You recollect I had sent to speak to him about you the very morning we came away. The events of the night had rendered our conversation unnecessary. I never knew that Miss Sinclair had been to Bradon except of late years.”

“No more she has, sir. But it was her father gave me my education. Oh ! sir, he was a gentleman and a good christian, albeit a protestant.”

“Thank you, Casey, your idea of my religion does not seem to be very high ?”

“Indeed, sir, and it is. I’ve been thinking over it, and I am half inclined to become a protestant myself.”

“That is a question I shall not discuss with you myself. If you are in earnest,

however, I can put you in the way of arriving at a sound decision by introducing you to a clergyman of my acquaintance. But I am rather interested in what you say about your connection with Mr. Sinclair."

"Its not a very long story, sir, and I'll make bold to tell it you. It may interest you, not on my account, sir, but on account of that angel at Bradon."

Cuthbert assumed an attitude of attention.

"Well, sir, my father was a Bradon man; but when he was a boy he went to Belfast, and became a porter in Mr. Sinclair's office. Mr. Sinclair was a merchant, or rather an agent for several merchants abroad. My father married a catholic maid in Mr. Sinclair's family. They had three children. Two of them died. My father followed them from an injury

caused by the fall of a heavy box he was lifting into the cellar. And when I was born my mother died likewise; I was, therefore, sir, an orphan from my birth. So Mr. Sinclair had me taken care of and educated. I was brought up a catholic, though he was a protestant. His friends wanted him to teach me his own religion; but he was a good man, sir; and he said that as my parents were catholics, he would not have me brought up in any religion but theirs.

“Well, sir, as soon as I was old enough Mr. Sinclair made me a kind of clerk in his office, and just about the same time he married. His wife sir, was a beautiful woman, just like Miss Ida, and as good, only not quite so proud like. They had one son who died, and then came Miss Ida. But, sir, misfortune seemed to follow them; and the people of Belfast

said it was a judgment on Mr. Sinclair for letting me be a catholic; however it made no change in their kindness for me. But one after another their sons died—such beautiful children, sir—but they all died within a month or two of their birth. So at last Mrs. Sinclair pined, and her health wore away. They said there was consumption in the family. But she picked up a good deal. Then once more she seemed likely to have a child. Miss Ida was about ten or twelve years old when one day a letter came to the master. He said nothing to his wife, for they treated her with such care that no accident might happen. But the newspapers brought the news to the town, and Mrs. Sinclair's mother, who was a devil incarnate, sir, if there ever was one, came to my mistress, and without a word of

preparation told her that her master was a ruined man. A large house in which nearly all his money was embarked had failed. Well, sir, that night Mrs. Sinclair was brought to bed of that poor lad and the next morning she died."

Casey paused for a moment; then he resumed:

"I never knew any one in such grief. He remained in Belfast only two months, during which time his hair, sir, grew as white as a shroud. Then he received some letters. He paid all his debts in full, and went abroad with his two children. Well, sir, I had always lived in the master's house, a little way out of town, half servant half clerk. I had laid by a good sum; so I went to Bradon and took the farm of his lordship."

"I know the rest of Miss Sinclair's story, thank you, Casey. Do you recollect the name of the house the failure of which caused Mr. Sinclair's?"

"I was trying to bring it to mind the other day. It was a house in some foreign parts. I think there were two names—a Greek name and an English one. The English name I am almost sure was Masters. But I don't know, sir, if Miss Ida would like my gossiping about her affairs. So, if you please, sir,"——

"Rely upon me, Casey; I shall not repeat anything you have told me."

Casey left the room, and Cuthbert remained in one of those moody fits of which he was not yet entirely cured.

He was thinking of those strange combinations which unite individuals

whose paths in life appear essentially divergent.

None can cast a retrospective glance without some such startling discovery—chance acquaintances involved in a common story radiating threads of a web converging to a common centre. Philosophers have declared that the wave of a hand may cause undulations through space productive of some great event after the lapse of decades. The King we have in childhood looked upon with awe, the acquaintance of a ball-room or a railway, the stranger directed on his path, the beggar assisted with a mite—these may perhaps speed us more than the friends of infancy, may mar us more bitterly than the rivals of maturity.

Old proverbs are true. In every

country, in every language, they are produced with the same scope, the same formula. And in this proverb all nations have agreed that Truth is stranger, far stranger, than fiction.

CHAPTER XVIII.

W E D D I N G - C A K E.

At length the physicians had proclaimed Lord Elmwood out of danger, and capable of commencing his journey to some foreign baths. The Ministerial arrangements were complete ; and almost on the eve of Lord Beaconsfield's wedding Cuthbert took his departure for Bradon.

It had been a great sacrifice on Lord

Beaconsfield's part to dispense with Cuthbert's attendance at the altar. But his kind heart accepted, without deprecation, this small portion of alloy to his happiness. *Julia* and Burney, the affianced pair, were part of the wedding party at Burnholme. Cuthbert's place was evidently elsewhere.

And Cuthbert sought his proper sphere. He did not brood on his misfortune. In the midst of his exertions, occasionally the cause of his grief was for a moment obliterated. The idea of Norah's falsehood was not constantly reduced to a formula. But in his mind the idea was constant; in his heart the grief was ever present. As at night he reposed his weary head, or in the morning awoke to resume his labours, he could not dismiss that sickening feeling of sadness—a sad-

ness to be dissipated neither by pleasure nor employment.

Before him lay his work—a poet's dream of desolation. Immediately around him the evil influence had partially subsided, creating of his cousin's village a comparative oasis. But for miles and miles in every direction, as far as eye could see or activity accomplish, Death, with its troops and its varied armour, had erected, of perishable humanity imperishable trophies.

What could stay the course of that avenger? The rich? The rich taxed to poverty occupied the workhouse whose previous inhabitants would work no more. The fruits of the earth were stricken with sore disease. The arm of the labourer hung powerless; the roof had been scattered from his shed, and his children rotted around him in unburied heaps. The social fabric

lay in ruins. One mighty whirlwind, and the work of ages had become a chaos. The vase had been poured to the dregs. But the lid had not fallen. Not even hope remained behind.

Cuthbert sat alone, near the dwelling of his fathers, poring over pamphlets and works that professed instruction for the crisis. Near him was placed unopened a wedge-shaped box, the bridal cake of his cousin. Mockery! While thousands lay gasping for the morsel that could save them, who could share the waste of careless luxury? He himself had worked, struggled, and written to relieve his suffering neighbours. Not a doit did he spend except for his actual necessities. His scanty store was doled out with a discriminating hand, niggardly from the number of the claimants. Was it for him or for any of God's thinking creatures

to lavish in one sensual mouthful the week's sustenance of a family.

* * * *

And what were all those who pretended to a share in the work of benevolence? What had they done—the lords and the legislators, the wise and the exalted? Yonder in the village manse, or in the priest's cottage, dwelt men whose fervent hearts and plodding footsteps bore peace where misery reigned, and life in the midst of despair and suffering.

Yes, theirs was the life for men. In prosperity, admiring congregations should listen to words of hope and everlasting felicity. In adversity, the loving flock would turn their dying eyes to the beloved pastor; and their souls, leaving earthly tabernacles, should bear his name on high, and plead for their benefactor at the foot of the eternal throne.

And what was his own career in comparison to the usefulness of Burton's? What direct benefit could he confer except when trenching on the minister's sphere, following his example and his duties, but without his authority or his sacred immunities?

He had tried the world, and had succeeded. The poet, the legislator, and the man of pleasure, had contributed their admiration. Senates had thundered their applause, and the learned had chronicled his deeds. Yet what was this by the side of the earnest prayers of the poor man rescued from the pains of death? What the congratulations of selfish politicians, before the gratitude of the orphan and widow?

Thus Cuthbert mused and pondered when, apart from the excitement of the world or the conversation of friends,

his mind was left for a brief space to its own resources.

And as he thus pondered, he heard from the corner of the building the laugh of the idiot boy.

“That will do,” smiled Cuthbert, bitterly. “The fool shall eat the meat of fools. The luxury unfitted in these scenes for man shall feed the human brutes. Every thing has its use. This idiot boy, with the animal taste of humanity, can enjoy those condiments, actuated by no consideration but his stomach.”

The boy had crept round the projecting oriel to Cuthbert’s seat on the lawn.

“Here, my boy,” said the latter, with a look of encouragement.

The boy timidly extended his hand to receive the proffered gift. Then he

laughed, a laugh perhaps of gratitude, and turning round he ran towards his sister's cottage.

“And I have never called,” murmured Cuthbert.

CHAPTER XIX.

I D A.

It was not, however, to Ida's cottage that Cuthbert bent his footsteps. The evening was approaching, and ordering a car he drove to Beston Glebe.

As he approached his destination, the ringing of church bells announced the celebration of some festival, and on his arrival he found his friends preparing to attend the evening service.

Alighting, he turned to accompany them. Glad, but somewhat astonished, they gave but a short greeting before entering the village fane. Mrs. Burton felt pleased at his change of manner. Hitherto she had known him careless of his devotions. To-night he was intent upon the ceremonies, and apparently absorbed in the worship.

At length the service was concluded, and the congregation was dispersed. Cuthbert lagged behind in the church with Burton, who was engaged on some parish arrangement in the vestry. Cuthbert thought he was alone.

For a moment he paused in a dark corner under the singing loft. The font was near him, surrounded by some hassocks. Kneeling on one of these he bowed for a moment in prayer. Never had he prayed so earnestly. He prayed for

consolation and for light. Whither should he go? What course in life should he pursue? To whom should he look for comfort or for counsel? Such were his prayers—the concentration of his whole aspirations—the narrative of all his perplexities. That short prayer was like a transient dream, that tells the tale of years.

After a few moments he was disturbed by a rustling sound proceeding from the opposite corner. He turned, half ashamed at his position. Perhaps it was Burton. The evening was coming on fast, and the spot was concealed by the increasing shadows of the gallery above. In a moment the figure of the worshipper emerged from concealment. It was that of a woman closely veiled. She bowed as she passed Cuthbert, and he recognized the beautiful Ida.

She moved on slowly to the churchyard,

where Mrs. Burton stood surrounded by a little flock full of petitions and of gratitude. Cuthbert soon joined them. As the clergyman's wife was beset by her retainers, the young man turned to converse with his neighbour.

"I hope you like your new dwelling," he began hesitatingly.

Ida bowed assent. Had there been a little more light the interrogator might have seen a flush upon her cheek. She was annoyed at the question. It reminded her of the obligation. She struggled for a moment. The cause was trifling, but the struggle was severe. Then she answered meekly,

"The cottage is delightful. I have to thank you for many attentions and additional comforts."

"You have, I assure you, to thank me for nothing. I am acting only as

agent for my cousin; and it is the duty of a landlord to provide for the comfort of his tenantry. Pray, allow me to place the whole matter on a business-like footing. You pay a rent for a habitable cottage. Lord Elmwood receives the rent, and makes the cottage habitable."

Ida's heart softened as her pride was conciliated. She felt inclined to continue the conversation.

"And how is poor Casey, Mr. St. Elme? He has sent his wife a great deal of money, poor woman, and writes that he is likely to succeed in life."

"He writes truly. I never knew so great a change in so short a time. His gratitude to you knows no bounds."

"I may say the same towards yourself."

"But you have a longer claim, Miss Sinclair."

"What! He has then told you"—

The pride returned with fresh vigour. It was her constant dread that any one should discover what all the world knew. And Cuthbert guessed her secret.

“He has told me that he is an old dependant of your family, and that to you and yours he owes all that is good in him.”

Once more the pride had been conciliated, and the heart still further softened.

“To me Casey’s absence has been of great use. His wife has been invaluable to me. My poor brother has taken a fancy to her, and the children are very kind to him. For the first time since we have arrived in Ireland I have had the courage to leave him. I dare say he will make himself happy without me. Yet I feel great fear, though I have only as yet been half a day absent from home.”

“I saw him this afternoon. I hope he is fond of cake, for I gave him all the wedge the Beaconsfields sent me.”

“That is indeed kind. But I wonder what he will do with it. Hitherto he has never accepted a present of the kind without insisting on my sharing it if I took only a crumb.”

“To tell you the truth, it struck me as curious that he ran off without tasting the contents of the box.”

By this time they had reached the parsonage. Burton and his wife, talking over parish matters, had been absorbed in their conversation, and were consequently some paces in advance.

The full moon was high in the heavens. The air was mild; and Burton proposed a stroll through the woods. All parties gave a ready assent, and the walk was resumed in the same order.

Cuthbert and Ida for some time followed in silence the clergyman and his wife. They were a handsome, happy pair. His tall manly form and her small well-shaped

figure never appeared to such advantage as when, her hand beneath his arm, she clung to him, proud of his protection, or as he gently assisted his young and loving wife over the small obstacles of a country ramble.

The same thought seemed to possess their two friends. As they kept silence their eyes followed the pair, whose continued and animated conversation appeared momentarily to exclude all idea of companionship.

Ida sighed. Her heart was full—not with jealousy, but with grief.

“Happy Burton!” said Cuthbert, roused by that sigh from his silence.

“Happy indeed!” answered Ida, as she accepted the proffered arm of Cuthbert.

“And will you also allow her to be happy?”

“Yes, she is happy.”

“I cannot conceive circumstances better calculated for real happiness than Burton’s: competency, popularity, health, a good position, and an incomparable wife. No cares, no contentions. Life flows smoothly on for him.”

“It is a happy life for him, but not my choice were I a man.”

“Indeed! What would be your choice?”

Ida was silent. The moonlight appeared to have engendered an over fascination in Cuthbert’s tone and manner. Ida wished for the moment to recall her pride. But the effort was not successful. Even the semblance of that feeling refused to obey the summons.

“May I not ask you?” he continued.

“Have I done wrong in asking the question?”

There was a deference in his man-

ner irresistible even to the proudest woman.

He bent towards Ida as he put the question. She raised her eyes to his. Her's were eyes that could not be daunted. They flashed like fireflies through her dark veil. She answered,

“I could not be a priest. A soldier, a sailor were well. But were I a man I should seek like the Roman not for gold, but to command those who possess gold. A priest is an exile, a man apart. He is exempt, perhaps, from the cares of manhood, but deprived also of its honours, its privileges, its superiority, its responsibilities. When a priest rises above his station it is by art, not by courage. A woman could obtain the same eminence. The life of man should be a perpetual strife for the mastery.”

“Yes. But you do not know the

accessories and consequences of such a life. Failure; even if successful, the constant fear of failure. In such a career a man challenges the criticism of the whole world."

"Dans un noble projet on tombe noblement."

"Yet I think that, with the exception of a few, men can accomplish more good in a circumscribed sphere than in one more extended."

"The good thus affected is perhaps sooner apparent, but less durable; and scarcely worthy a man."

"Yet, for the moment, I should like it."

"What! in your present position? With fame and power within your grasp—you would bandage your mind like a beggar his limbs, conceal its existence, and deaden its vitality?"

“Still, this is Burton’s career; and he is, you confess, happy.”

“It is his career. But you are not Mr. Burton. He possessed none of your advantages, and embraced a profession that seemed to offer him the best prospects—conscientiously embraced it, as he has conscientiously discharged its duties. But he had never entered public life—he had never defeated by his speech an important measure.”

Cuthbert was surprised. He had wished to speak in general terms, but gradually the conversation had contracted to his individuality. He was flattered.

“Then,” he said in a low tone, “you are speaking, not of men in general, but of myself in particular.”

Again those dark eyes were turned to his, but no longer flashing proudly.

"I was thinking of you," she answered.

And the idiot boy's laugh shrieked through the air.

She started convulsively. Her heart throbbed and beat audibly.

"Oh! my God, have mercy! Never, never!" she exclaimed scarce audibly.

The two hurried onward to the spot whence the sound proceeded. Yes, there was the idiot boy in the arms of Burton, shrieking his laugh or moaning his wild cadence. In his hand he held the wedge-shaped box given him by Cuthbert. It had not been touched. Ida alone was to open it.

And for this purpose, with a vague instinct, the boy had wandered from his home to find his sister. He had walked in the direction she had in the morning taken, until fatigued and footsore he sat

on a branch to repose his weary limbs. He lay rather than sat, moaning and laughing with fatigue. But as Mrs. Burton approached him, he had struck at her, and Burton's whole strength scarce sufficed to control his fury.

As they were within a few steps Ida left Cuthbert's arm. With an internal prayer she ran on towards her brother, and taking him by the hand and gazing in his face, she led him quietly away.

Her three companions followed her in silence until they reached the house.

"Would you order my clothes to be packed," she said, poor girl! "and send into the village for a car? I must go back at once with Alfred."

"Why go back to-night? Surely you can stay"——

"Not a moment. For a day I have

forgotten my duty. It has been recalled to me too severely ever again to be forgotten."

"But will you not remain here with him till to-morrow at least?"

"Thank you, there are many reasons against it. He might frighten your little girl who is not well; and I do not know how he would spend the night away from his nurse."

"In that case I dare say Mr. St. Elme can give both of you seats in his car," said Mr. Burton.

Cuthbert had been dying to make the proposal.

"I think it would be the best plan. My horse is a fast trotter, and there is quite room enough for luggage."

Ida accepted the offer silently.

CHAPTER XX.

HOMEWARDS.

SHE maintained her silence till she reached her home, and Cuthbert did not venture to disturb her.

The shock had been too rude. For a moment had she attempted to infringe the tether of her chain. Bitter indeed had been the punishment.

And she sat at her brother's side, who slept vacantly in the corner, holding

his hand as she inly prayed for comfort and for strength.

When she took leave of Cuthbert, it was with a tone and a look strangely combining resentment and remorse. For a moment he had unconsciously charmed her into oblivion of her self-imposed task. But for him she would not have forgotten her brother. Cuthbert had been the cause of her fault and a portion of her punishment.

But still beneath the remorse and the resentment there flowed a softer but still a purer current.

As she alighted at the door of her cottage, Cuthbert, with a tenderness almost womanly, lifted her sleeping brother from the car.

Ida bade him good night, first with her natural reserve, then smilingly with increased cordiality.

“ Good night, Miss Sinclair. I have

been silenced by your arguments, but not yet convinced. When can we renew the discussion?"

She paused a minute without answering. The proud flush mounted to her cheek and forehead almost with an expression of pain. Her lip curved as he had seen it on their first meeting, when the incendiaries stood daunted by her glance.

But Cuthbert was no incendiary. Calmly and steadily he returned look for look. And once more the girl's features resumed their softer cast, and she answered, "When you like, Mr. St. Elme."

CHAPTER XXI.

NIGHT MELODIES.

As he turned away he heard the notes of a harp. Thus used Ida to chase away the dark ideas that came across her solitude. She had but few comforters, and happy was it for the lonely maiden that music was a companion not to be estranged by disaster. Her fingers rapidly ran over a prelude, new to Cuthbert. It was in a minor key, that beautiful form of melody adopted in all countries as

well by the learned as by the inartistic, for the melancholy expression of the less violent passions.

She played it over more than once ; while Cuthbert, yielding to the attraction, seated himself noiselessly on a rough seat against the cottage wall, concealed by a rustic verandah.

At length he heard the tones of her voice. Cuthbert bent his head to listen. Her voice was, as he anticipated, a rich pure contralto. The voice is the representative of the soul, and Ida could have possessed no other. Cuthbert listened. The words were his own. They had been written in his poetic youth at Florence, and inserted in his novel.

“ This life, child, is lonely for me,
Its dreariness palls on my soul ;
'Tis like some dark, poisonous sea,
Where the wild billows uselessly roll.

“And I seek for some rock in this ocean
Secure from the waves as they beat,
Where their anger can cause no commotion
As they scatter their spray at my feet.”

The voice ceased, but Cuthbert still listened. His heart throbbed within him. Little had he expected thus to hear his lines sung by such lips and with such a melody. He had written them in one of those fits of despondency, the luxury of young ambitious minds. They bore all the traces of youth—its vague aspirations and vain display. But for him it was sufficient reward that Ida could adopt them at such a moment; that she could purify and elevate them by her music to the expression of her own pure thoughts.

The music ceased, but Cuthbert stirred

not. It was not late, and he dreaded the solitude of his home. For him musing and music had an affinity not in the words alone. Even were Ida to sing no more that night, he could sit in that beautiful moonlight, looking at the scene around, listening to the birds, the rustle of the trees, and the murmuring of the waters; thinking of the past, the present, and the future, of himself and of Ida.

“Man superior walks)

Along the glad creation, musing praise,
And looking lively gratitude.”

Suddenly he heard the casement opened that looked on the scene before him. He felt that Ida was at the window. He rejoiced at the idea that her thoughts were in harmony with his own.

Then again, after a few moments, his

ears caught the sound of an instrument, not of the harp this time, but of a piano, which from the shape of the little sitting-room stood necessarily in the oriel. This time the prelude was of a different caste, suited to the change of instruments. The chords united from her full touch in a hymn of praise. And then her voice followed, clear, and without an effort in its highest tones, occasionally reaching the innermost recesses of the heart in its deeper ringing accents.

Again the words were his. He had lately written them as a literary experiment, and transmitted them to Burton for an opinion. Burton had condemned them, but they had met the approval of his wife. From her Ida must have received them.

“The night is glad ! The night is glad !

Far from the city flaunting glare,

On God’s own earth, in God’s own air,

The night is glad !

Far from the squalid haunts of men,

Where the green hedge divides the glen,

The night is glad !

Up yonder, on the moonlit hill,

Which smoothly darkens in the shade,

Down in the valley and the glade,

Where all is hush’d, where all is still,

The night is glad, is glad for me !

Around the lake, upon the sward,

Where labour slumbers peacefully,

Where beams the moon on cot and lea,

And the dark leaves rustle wearily,

And the waters bubble cheerily,

Rouse thee, my soul, and praise thy Lord !

The night is glad, is glad for thee !

The night ! God’s night is glad !”

The voice ceased, but Cuthbert moved not. Perhaps he might hear it once again. Some minutes elapsed. The songstress must once more be watching

the beautiful landscape. Yes! she shuts the casement. Still he does not go. Some minutes elapse. Of a sudden he hears a rustle by his side, and an exclamation.

Ida regards him proudly, and with surprise.

Confusedly but in silence Cuthbert rises. Yet not a word has passed. Is she angry at his intrusion? No. That dark eye flashes no resentment. For a moment it turns towards him, then in confusion is averted. Cuthbert has learnt the maiden's secret. He springs forward to seize her unresisting hand.

"Forgive me, Ida, for I love you!"

And from the cottage the shrill laugh of the idiot quavers forth a fearful answer.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVERS' VOWS.

CUTHBERT had passed the night sleepless and unhappy. The first blush of love, the confession spoken not in words had for a moment raised his hopes. But as Ida had withdrawn her hand, as she had beckoned him to leave her, the expression of mournful, stern farewell had turned backward the current of his joy.

It was late ere he appeared in the morning. His servants, his followers,

and the men of business had anxiously awaited his rising. Well they loved the young master. Well they knew how much depended on his care. And as they saw the gloom upon his brow the household moved round him slowly in their avocations, and evinced by such deeds their sympathy with his unknown suffering.

The morning meal was sent away scarce tasted. Then Cuthbert turned to his work, disposing of his business with energy and haste, but not without care. Little had to be done, and this in a short time was accomplished. He wished to be alone, to commune with his own feelings and devise some plan for the attainment of his object.

The hours passed, and late in the afternoon he emerged on the lawn. The boy Alfred was hiding amongst the shrubwood

as was his wont, avoiding the inspection of strangers. But on Cuthbert's approval his instinct taught him to approach. He took the young man's hand, and placing it on his shoulder as though the hand were his sister's, moved towards the cottage.

Attracted by the idiot's laugh, Ida appeared at the glass door opening on the park. As she saw her brother's companion, her cheek mantled with that hue lately become no stranger to her fair countenance. She raised that small, well modelled head proudly. The fire, that wild bright fire, came to her eyes, and she curved that short lip disdainfully and almost in defiance.

She looked again and saw the two together—the two that in the whole world she loved the best. Her bosom heaved in emotion, and casting down her eyes she led the way to the music room.

And Alfred looked from one to the other. And, as still clinging to Cuthbert, he ascended the stairs, his treble laugh came deeper and almost melodiously.

They sat together—the three—in the oriel overlooking the park. It was the first beginning of autumn twilight. The yellow sun had scarcely disappeared from the summit of the hills around.

Ida turned her eyes reproachfully. Her cheek was burning, and she could not speak.

Cuthbert broke the silence. His words were those already spoken.

“Forgive me, Ida. I love you.”

Then they paused. Cuthbert shuddered, as he expected the ominous answer of the brother.

But the brother was no longer with them. For in a distant recess of the room he sat as usual crouching in a corner,

staring vacantly and occupied with his own vacuity. Perhaps he was thinking.

“Ida, Ida, I love you—I love you.”

Her eyes responded softly. The stern look was passed away, and she answered—

“And I too—I love you.”

He placed his arm around her and clasped her to his breast. Unresisting for a moment her head fell upon his shoulder. Once did he press his lips to hers. And once again he told her of his love.

“Ida, my Ida, I love you.”

Then she arose. Once more that frown of pride, that glance of defiance. Her hands were clenched in agony. Her heart beat almost to bursting. Her eyes started from her head. Her voice spoke hoarsely.

“Yes, yes,” she said, “you love me; and I—oh! God, oh! Heaven—how I love you! For one moment I have yielded

myself to your love, to my fondness! For one moment, one moment, one moment! God forgive me—but for one moment! And years of misery, long, bitter years, shall atone for that moment's weakness. Farewell, Cuthbert! Farewell, my own loved Cuthbert, my best beloved. Farewell. Never again shall I behold those eyes that I have loved so well, nor hear your voice. Still I may cherish your image. Yes, without a crime I may think how I have loved you as I tear you from my heart, for we may never meet again. No, Cuthbert—never, never.”

And the girl sobbed, and her voice choked as that dread laugh mingled with her misery.

“Ida! Ida! my love, wherefore?” and once more he endeavoured to embrace her fair waist. But she shuddered and avoided him, fear in her eye as though death stood between them.

She clutched her chair, as, one hand concealed, the fingers were twisting in her agony.

What thoughts revolved in that brain as the loving girl stood gazing at her lover! Hope, fear, grief, pride, love—love and misplaced duty. The conflict was too violent. She sank in her chair and wept.

And Cuthbert, taking the maiden's hand, once more told her of his love. For hours, holding her hand, his lips poured forth in impassioned eloquence his hopes, his fears. As the shades of evening drew near once again he pressed her lips—once again he entreated.

"I can never leave that boy," she answered. "I have sworn to guard and defend him through life, to compensate him for all that is denied him."

Her lips were firmly clenched, and her pride confirmed her resolve.

“But will you not let me share your task?”

“Never. As I have sworn to protect him, so I have sworn never to inflict on another the curse that clings to me. I love you both, and I will sacrifice neither. Cuthbert, it is time for you to leave me. Farewell.”

And once more he entreated—not for her love, but for permission once again to combat her resolution.

Her voice faltered as she answered.

“When we meet again I will listen to all you have to tell me.”

As he rose to leave her lips parted in a smile of ineffable sweetness. Once more he clasped her unresisting to his heart. And once more as he left she told him of her love. And once more the low wailing laugh of the idiot joined in the lover's vows.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHANCES OF THE POST.

THROUGH the long night Cuthbert revolved in his mind the actions of the past day. Never had he experienced a feeling so wild, so headlong, as that sudden passion for the beautiful, imperious Ida. He had known her but a few days, and yet in those transient phases of her character, in that conflict and contrast of an impetuous nature trained to unnatural calmness, his heart and mind were equally

entangled and bewildered without reflection and without foresight.

In those two days of vehement emotion he had lived years of love and fancy. Those changing inexplicable moods had compressed in one short space the events of a life's history. Space, not time, is the secret of eternity. To borrow the beautiful illustration of an anonymous philosopher, a being fallen to the earth from the farthest star might behold in his descent chronicled on each succeeding gradation the history of Terra from her birth. The phantasmagoria of a magic lantern compressed to a speck would contain every particle of their original form. The broken musical mechanism might, as though in one note, whirl every phrase of an elaborate melody.

Cuthbert had lived a lifetime with Ida. In that short space he had learnt the

whole history of her soul. Her secrets were no longer concealed. Her thoughts had become his, and circumstance was immaterial.

And as he learnt to love the lonely girl, he thought his task not hopeless. Her character was in his possession. He could watch and forestal each turn of her exceptional disposition. It might be long ere he could overcome the prejudice strengthened by the habit of her heart, and resolution of her mind. But patience and energy should tame her impetuosity and remove her scruples. No obstacle should daunt his pursuit ; no false reasoning obscure his judgment. Henceforth his heart as well as his intellect should have an object. His heart to be blessed by the attainment of Ida ; his intellect to be guided and nerved by her acute mind and well-taught purpose.

As the day broke he turned to seek that rest more needful to the strong man than to the weaker woman. It was not long ere his servant disturbed his slumbers. Cuthbert for a moment opened his weary eyelids. By his side was an indistinct vision of letters. Drowsy and weary, he yielded once more to the luxury of sleep, and the sun was high in the horizon ere he prepared to rise.

His toilet was at length complete, and not without interest he turned to the little heap of letters on the table near him. The post and epistolary correspondence for him had a never-ending attraction. They had played no small part in the drama of his life. In his childhood a letter had indicated the place and mode of his education. A letter had told him that at Beaconsfield his holidays would find a home. A letter had told him of his ac-

cession of fortune, of his election, of his publisher's approval, and of Norah's desertion. The post was to Cuthbert a never-failing excitement, a lottery with prizes and with blanks. He expected its arrival much as the gambler looks for the turning of the die, the stoppage of the wheel, or the addition of the cards. Now his stake was multiplied, now the game presented zero.

And like all players, Cuthbert was superstitious at his game. Never, scarcely, could he be induced to open his letters out of the order in which they lay. His servant had contracted a habit of placing them seal upwards, and thus afforded every chance of courting by her own rules the favours of the blind goddess.

A letter from Edith was first presented. It was full of hope and of affection. The baths had much improved her father's

health, and she hoped that in a short time he would be able to visit Ireland and willingly resume the duties he had so long abandoned. She looked forward to this visit as a pleasure. She longed to make the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Burton, and of the beautiful, interesting girl he had so well described to her. And how was Cuthbert himself? Was he well? Was he happy? Not overworked, she hoped, nor over anxious? Indeed he must feel solitary, alone in that rambling house. But he was never at a loss for occupation. Soon they would all be coming to Bradon, and he knew that his cousin's only wish would be to make his happiness. And the Beaconsfields also, they would be going to Beston about the same time with the Burneys. Feeling Edith! The last word was written unsteadily. However, the truth must be

told. The Burneys were also to accompany "their illustrious relatives." There was to be no party. The two landlords did not judge the moment opportune for a display of profusion. And Edith was glad of the retirement. Her father required much of her attention. And has she not, in addition, duties and occupations sufficient to employ her time—to act the part of Mrs. Burton as regarded Bradon, and to join with her cousin Cuthbert in the good works he had undertaken? And towards the end of the letter came the confidential information usually attributed to a lady's postscript. She had lately heard from Barralevski, who asked much after his friends. Julia Lady Beaconsfield improved amazingly upon acquaintance. At Burnholme she was almost adored by the poor, to whom it appears she had devoted all her time and

money. She was very kind, and such a good wife to Edward. And Norah, of course she was a good wife to Mr. Burney. But still she was very fond of amusement, and once at Paris nothing could take her away. Mr. Burney had wished to show her Switzerland and Italy. Before her marriage she had promised to accompany him for a year or two through Europe. But now nothing but Paris would content her. And Mr. Burney, nothing could be kinder or more affectionate. But still ——. Cuthbert knew that he had the power of saying disagreeable things, and sometimes, to speak the truth, he made use of galling expressions to his wife, even before strangers. Cuthbert knew that Norah possessed a wonderful command of temper. But sometimes she seemed annoyed at Mr. Burney's remonstrances. The result was, that though

very fond of each other, Burney seemed to have taken to his own pursuits, and was not quite so much in the society of his wife as was usual for people married so short a time. Then, Edith had seen Sir Hugh Dawnay. She could not like him. He was very civil and attentive; but still, he was constantly saying things she could not approve—sarcasms about religion and good people. But dear Cuthbert must say nothing about this, and must burn the letter. Every one united in love, and she was his affectionate cousin Edith.

He extended his hand once more. The letter this time told its own story. It bore a large seal with Edward's arms. With all Cuthbert's good nature, there lurked in his heart a certain pride of ancestry; and he could scarcely restrain a smile at the somewhat ostentatious blazon.

“Cave Sullivan.” Involuntarily one of Dawnay’s sayings rose to his mind, “Cave Sullivan.” The first of the race had been in the memory of man a money-lender, and the caution was very necessary.

Edward gave Cuthbert the same news as had been contained in Edith’s longer effusion.

Julia was still an angel. Each succeeding day developed new virtues. Every one admired her; and she was not the least spoilt—on the contrary. He had written to Burton, and to Stone his agent, by the same post, to announce his approaching arrival. He knew that the people would wish to give him a hearty welcome on his marriage, but he begged that there might be no profusion, so indecent under present circumstances. He then proceeded almost in the same order

as Edith. Lord Elmwood was better, and not in bad spirits, but much broken. His hair had whitened considerably, and he was quite an old man. Edith was a dear good girl, and the man would be happy who obtained her as his wife. She was an angel of goodness. But now he approached a subject which gave him much uneasiness. Burney and Norah did not get on well together. She thought of nothing but amusement, and Burney gave her completely her own way. The result was that they were seldom together. That infernal fellow Dawnay (*sic in orig.*) was always prowling about the house and much more intimate with Norah than her brother liked. He, Edward, was very much embarrassed. He did not like to consult Julia, who would be shocked at the idea. He could not speak to Dawnay. With Norah he had remonstrated very

seriously. But she was so clever she always got the best of him. Sometimes she promised to be more careful. Sometimes she laughed at him; and sometimes she affected anger, saying that so long as her husband was satisfied, she could not see what could warrant any one else in interfering with her proceedings. As to mentioning the matter to Burney, that was simply out of the question. Burney could not be blind to Norah's absurd flirtation; and under any circumstances it would be infamous to sow dissension between a man and his wife.

Cuthbert was entreated to think over the matter. He would soon have means of judging, as Dawnay had volunteered himself for Beston when he heard that the Burneys were going there.

Two letters only remained. The nearest was from Lord Elmwood. It was the first

he had written since his illness. His writing was much changed. It was trembling and senile; the letter was short but affecting. He touched on the wrongs he had inflicted on Cuthbert, wrongs already divined by the sufferer, and entreated for pardon. His grief had been rendered doubly poignant by Cuthbert's noble behaviour; but Cuthbert could forgive a man so fallen, whose hopes had been crushed when on the eve of realization. And yet there was some consolation. From what he had lately seen, he felt that there was no room for regret that Norah had not become the wife of Cuthbert.

One letter only remained. It was fortunate that chance had withheld it to the last. Otherwise perhaps Cuthbert had never read the letters of his friends. He extended his hand and examined the seal. It bore the name of Ida. Why write when

so near? With trembling hand he tore open the cover.

“When you receive this I shall be far away—gone for ever. If you have loved me, seek not to find me. This is the only proof of your affection that I ask, the only proof you can give me. I entreat this favour by all the love, the undying love, I bear for you. God knows how deeply, how devotedly I love you. But it must not be.

“For years Alfred and I have been alone, without a relative, with few friends. He has never known a parent’s love. His mother died at his birth, and his father loathed him as the constant memento of affliction.

“I have told you of my vow. It could not be broken without the punishment of perjury, and who knows the consequences of such guilt. Heaven forbid that I should bring such evil on the only being who on

God's earth I love, who is knitted to my heart for ever.

“Yes, Cuthbert, I love you with all the love of woman. That love henceforth will be my only consolation. I prove it by a sacrifice so great that not even you can judge of its extent. Had we married, had I accepted your generous offer, the punishment would have fallen upon you. As it is, I alone shall be the sufferer. You know not, you cannot even imagine, the burden I have to bear. Better were it to be bound for life to a corpse than to one possessed of the passions unchecked by the reason of humanity. I can bear the lot alone. I could not share it with another. And with you? Could I affix on you a brand like that of Cain? You are born for great things. Your career will be one of power; your companions will be the powerful. Could you give a place at your

board to an idiot—yes, I will not soften the word, an idiot? What would statesmen have thought of such a comrade? He would have wandered unchecked about your house. His laughter would have interrupted your studies, your occupations. His violent fits of anger would have closed your doors, even to those whose absence might cause your ruin. I should have stipulated for this: the freedom he now enjoys—the care of which he is the object. None should have chastised him, or even spoken a harsh word. All his wishes should have been forestalled. He would have been the master of your household.

“You would have borne all this perhaps, for you love me; and your love is not to be deterred by sacrifice.

“Had we married, such and even

greater would have been the sacrifice required of you.

“Yes, you would have married a woman you loved, conferring no advantage, no family, no fortune, a few accomplishments, some personal attractions, and undying love. But because that love is undying, do I renounce you. Under the most favourable phase I should be what the world would call a bad match. This would be immaterial. You would have possessed sufficient of the world’s gifts for both, and at least I should not have disgraced you. But I should likewise have brought with me a constant curse—a curse which, thank God, you will never undergo. And therefore, Cuthbert, I renounce you. I renounce your love, your fame, and all the attractions of the world. Consoled by your love, I leave you for ever. For ever I shall pray

for your success and your happiness. Your name will reach me often and often. Your memory will bring me comfort in my distress. You, Cuthbert, will be happy, and I—I shall be happy likewise."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRIENDS IN NEED.

GRIEF, as we have seen before, took a strange effect on Cuthbert. His mind assumed a fearful, intense calmness. He spoke not a word, and none could tell the thoughts that surged and boiled beneath that lofty brow.

Calmly he walked to the cottage. The story was told in a few words by Mrs. Casey. Late last night Ida had ordered a car and a cart to be ready before day-

break. She had written to Mr. Slaney and Mr. Burton, and had left money sufficient to pay her accounts. At a neighbouring town she had taken the Dublin coach.

Later Cuthbert received the agent's letters. Ida, thanking him for his kindness, had begged him to sell her few articles of furniture and to give the proceeds to the poor. Everything else had been rapidly packed up and taken away—books, pictures, and the harp. The hired piano was to be returned the same day. Ida had left sufficient to pay the expenses of conveyance.

Cuthbert glanced rapidly round the deserted rooms. On the piano lay two sheets of paper—the rough outline of the music composed for his words. On the margin was written the name of Ida, hastily scribbled more than once in the

intervals of composition. Possessing himself of these last relics of her he loved so well, Cuthbert returned to his house. Not even then did he neglect his duties. Punctually and conscientiously did he perform his daily task. Then calling for his horse he trotted slowly down the avenue.

Riding slowly, he at length reached the spot where first he had seen the idiot. Drawing in his horse, he surveyed the scene. No murmur, no sound escaped his lips. His teeth were clenched and his nostrils distended. Then touching his horse, he continued his way to the farm house where first he had seen Ida. Quietly and calmly, as before, did he cast his eyes round the spot. Every word, every gesture, of that night passed through his agitated mind. But still he com-

pressed his lips, still he held his breath. Turning his horse's head, he galloped to Beston.

His friends were seated alone. The children had retired to the nursery. Burton and his wife were playing at chess, and discussing in astonishment the intelligence conveyed by Ida's letter. It contained but a few words. She bade them farewell—a long farewell. She had left never to return.

Cuthbert threw himself into an arm chair near the fire.

“What an extraordinary event!” began Burton.

“Wonderful!” answered his wife, moving her head mournfully. “Something very extraordinary must have occurred to cause such a sudden resolution. Perhaps for us it is better she has gone away

so soon. I was becoming very fond of her, and later perhaps I should have felt the separation more severely."

"What a strange being! So attractive, and so solitary!"

Cuthbert turned his chair. His friends often indulged him in fits of abstraction, continuing their usual avocations notwithstanding his long mood of silence.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "I am not very fortunate in my loves, Mrs. Burton."

There was in his laughter a sharp, hysteric tone.

"What can you mean?"

"Mean? Did you not say she was attractive?"

"My dear Cuthbert"——

"Yes, Burton, yes. You may wonder. It may have been sudden, but I tell you I loved her! Yes, I loved Ida Sinclair. You wish to know the reason of her de-

parture. Read that. Yes, Mrs. Burton, you can read it. There is no secret in the matter."

Rising from her chair, Mrs. Burton leant over her husband's shoulder, and read with him the strange epistle.

Folding it, Burton returned it without comment.

"Now, Burton, I dare say you would like to know my project. I feel myself at the present moment just the make for a priest. I shall accept the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. Nay, I can aspire to the manor of Hempholme, and shall adopt that profession which you adorn. You say nothing. You think I am not in earnest. We shall see. As to my qualifications, I know Greek passably; I am not a bad Latin scholar. I have to a certain extent studied the Fathers. I can repeat the Catechism and the Thirty-

nine Articles. I am not destitute of the gift of speech, and am at present without any great object in life. Were I a Catholic I should enter a convent. Not being a member of that church, I become a worthy Protestant minister."

Burton looked steadily at his friend. The clergyman would have spoken. The Christian held his peace.

And his wife, her eyes filled with tears, rose and left the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DARK FIT.

BENDING over the fire, Cuthbert was silent for a short time. At length he spoke.

“ Well, Burton, you have nothing to say to me. You approve my project. But whether you do or not I am resolved on it.”

“ Then, Cuthbert, why argue the matter?”

“ For the sake of conversation. If you

do not choose to speak to me I shall go away. I can be silent enough at home."

"I will speak to you on any other subject."

"But why not on this? Surely from civility to your guest you should allow him to choose his own topics."

Perplexed and grieved, but not angry, Burton gave no answer.

"Well, Burton, continued Cuthbert, rising, "I thought you were a friend. I confess I have no regard for holiday friendships."

"I am your friend, Cuthbert."

"Yes, when I am in good spirits and can amuse you. But from the moment you see me in distress"—

"I am still more your friend. Believe me, there are few friends who love you so well as myself and Mary."

"Then I must say friendship is—but

a name, as small philosophers declare. Your wife leaves the room, and you wont say a word to me. Good night. When everything goes smoothly with me, and I am in a mood to please your critical and graduated friendship, perhaps my society may be more acceptable."

"Cuthbert, dear Cuddie, don't leave me like this."

But, heedless of his words, Cuthbert closed the door.

Burton did not follow. He trusted to his wife.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WOMAN'S SECRET.

CUTHBERT walked quickly to the hall. His hand was on the latch when a small hand touched his arm, and a soft voice called him

“Mr. St. Elme—Cuthbert.”

It was the first time she had called him by his christian name. He turned round gently, and Mrs. Burton led him to her husband's study. Her features still bore

the traces of tears. 'Her lip quivered as she spoke.

"I have heard all," she began, trying to force a smile. For once I have played the eaves-dropper. You are angry with my husband. Is it right?"

She turned her soft face towards him.

"Indeed what he said was true. You have few friends who love you so well as ourselves."

The cloud began to dissipate.

"Then why would neither of you speak to me? You left the room."

"Not without cause."

The tears started once more to her eyes, and the heart of the young man melted within him.

"And Charles would not speak to me on a subject which interests me."

"Do you mean what you say?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then come back and he will talk over t till the morning if you like."

"No, thank you, I must go home. I wanted some comfort. I could not bear to be alone. I came here and I am sent away."

"No indeed you are not."

"Well, I shall go home at any rate. I wish now to think over my plans."

"Do as you like; but believe me there are few things you could ask that we should refuse you."

She held out her hand, and Cuthbert pressed it to his lips.

"I do believe you," he said. "Good night."

"Wait one moment I beseech you. Are you really in earnest in what you have said?"

"Quite. I shall write to-morrow to the Treasury."

“Oh! think of it to-night! For Heaven’s sake do nothing rashly! Recollect the letter once gone it cannot be recalled.

“And think, oh! think how irrevocable is the step you contemplate. You may renounce your career. But if you enter the church, recollect you cannot then turn back. The moment afterwards you may repent what you have done. But then it will be too late.”

“I have thought of it and am quite decided.”

“Thank God, you cannot carry out your intention immediately. Remember our conversation when you first came here. Are you fitted for the profession on which you are rushing so heedlessly. I do not ask you to reflect on higher things. I cannot preach to you, and you are not in a mood for such conversation. But remember that the priesthood is not a

profession to be adopted like a worldly calling. You are not angry with me. You wished to speak of this one subject, and I am speaking of it."

"I could never be angry with you. But I think my mind is made up."

"But you will reflect before you take any step, even that of resigning your seat. Will you promise me?"

She looked at him so earnestly, so imploringly, that it would have required a heart formed of much harder material to resist her petition.

"I will promise you. I will think of it till to-morrow."

"Thank you. One word more. I do not wish to wound you. But think, think of that dear girl. You love her, I know you do, and I know her mind so well. She has made a sacrifice of which few women would be capable. Do you not

think that in her solitude, and through her life of wretchedness, the little happiness she will receive will be from the news of your success, your prosperity, your fame."

Cuthbert pressed the hand he had not relinquished. Once more his teeth were clenched, his nostril distended, and his eyes opened wide seemed starting from their sockets.

"And now only one word more. Cuthbert," she continued affectionately, "let me preach to you for one moment. Will you also recollect that for us poor mortals there is a source of consolation far deeper, far holier, far more lasting than any human friendship or influence? Will you, dear Cuthbert, promise me likewise before you go to bed to seek for that consolation, for that counsel, which One alone can give you? Will you, Cuthbert? Will

you open your Bible anywhere, and read on until you find comfort? This is what I do in all my grief and I have had some bitter grief. Will you do this, and will you pray to be guided in your undertakings by Him who cannot err?"

"I will," he answered, and he turned away.

She watched him affectionately as he was about to leave. But suddenly he stopped.

"Ask your husband," he said, "to forgive me, and to thank God for such a wife."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LEGACY.

AND when Cuthbert had reached his home, he obeyed the gentle influence.

Unlocking a travelling case which for months had remained closed, he took from it a small black book. It was his father's Bible. It opened at the fly-leaf. The page was covered with writing, still distinct though faded from the effect of time.

"These are my words, darling Cuddie. Think of me sometimes, my little boy, when you can hear my voice no more. But love your mother, love her ever, for she is an angel of

light. You will recollect what I am going to say to you. Though you are now a little child, you cannot ever forget the words which your father spoke to you on his death bed. Never let any want, any persuasion drive you to become a clergyman, unless you feel in your heart that it is right in the sight of God. Rather beg in the streets, or dig in the fields, than enter the priesthood, if your conscience be not with you."

And Cuthbert opened the book, and he thought of his father on his death bed, and of his mother; and his tears blistered the pages as he read on and found comfort. Then kneeling he prayed long and earnestly for counsel and for strength. And at that hour perchance there were others mingling their orisons with his whose hearts on earth thought but of him.

He looked at the book before him vacantly. The edges were gilt, but the binding carefully covered in leather. Un-

consciously forcing the book backwards, Cuthbert withdrew this cover. Doubtless some name was stamped on the side.

The action was almost involuntary, and rapid as the idea which had originated it. He placed the book on its edge, and the pages receded from the back. As he lifted it up again from the table, three small packets fell upon the table. Surprised, Cuthbert took them up to examine their contents. They were each labelled, and apparently contained locks of hair.

The handwriting was small and feminine, evidently that of his mother. The first contained more than one lock of his own hair. It was labelled "Cuthbert—four, five, and six years old." Seven years, and the hand had recorded no more. Then came the second packet—"Basil." The hair was dark and streaked with gray. The third packet likewise bore but one name—Barralevski.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN EXPECTED ARRIVAL.

THE resolution to enter the church had not been suddenly forced on Cuthbert by the departure of Ida. For months previous the retirement of the country had partially enervated his intellectual system. Apart from the life of excitement which from an early period had changed the whole tenor of his character, his mind not yet entirely hardened in the new mould wandered unconsciously to its

early predilections. As a boy his aspirations had been for tranquillity, lettered ease, and domestic joys. As a youth and as a man such a life still remained his ideal of happiness—to be realized when the ordeal of the world was over. But meanwhile the tumult of life had taken its effect. If called upon to renounce at once the occupations and pleasures of ambition, he would have shrunk appalled from the sacrifice. In his soul there contended two distinct and hostile influences, the natural and the artificial. In cities, in the haunts of men, the natural was suppressed, kept in reserve for moments of repose, as poetry solaces the leisure of the minister, the general, or the judge. Emulation, the desire of pre-eminence, stifled the call of natural content. In a crowd the second, the superadded disposition, was firmly seated, settled in its place by the

passions which govern men's minds. But these stimulants once removed, art was shaken in her throne. Where she could not act her sway became divided, her rewards appeared inadequate, her service less brilliant. *Procul negotiis*, the actor became a bystander. While Art could not use her blandishments, her sphere of usefulness appeared contracted. While Nature prompted, her rival was depreciated. How small appeared the struggles for pre-eminence, their selfishness exaggerated, their merits darkened. Such had been the moral process undergone by Cuthbert. As with the legionaries of old, inaction begat licence. He must for ever battle, for with his armour he laid aside his energy.

But now repose began to pall on him. One violent shock had taught him the value of his youthful struggles. Amidst

the din and turmoil of capitals, in the sphere designed for him alone, could he find the comfort of oblivion.

The days sped by, and all was ready at the two villages for the reception of their masters.

Their arrival was expected with impatience. In the depth of distress, any event seemed to the minds of the sanguine people teeming with benefit. And Cuthbert took good care to increase the growing popularity of his relatives. There is one course which infallibly winds its way to the disinterested heart of man. Sometimes it is known as charity, sometimes as enterprise, sometimes as example. But whatever the denomination adhering to the method, the practice is invariably attended with success. That man is sure to be popular amongst those with whom he is brought in connexion when he in-

creases their wealth, or heightens their comforts.

And Cuthbert adopted that generous policy. He introduced into Bradon that subtle influence in its various developments. His heart was charitable, his intelligence enterprising, his conduct exemplary. The inhabitants of Bradon, following his lead and sharing in his fortune, emerged from the slough of their late sufferings, and became reconciled to their lot and their landlord.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COUNTRY CRITICISM.

At length the day arrived which was to welcome the two Earls to their domains. The road to Beston lay through Bradon; and simultaneously did the two peers share in the honours of "The Conquering Hero." First, Lord and Lady Beaconsfield, in an open barouche, drove past the shouting and admiring throng, with Mr. and Lady Norah Burney. Then followed Lord and Lady Elmwood and

their daughter. The peer, wrapped in furs and cloaks, forcing on his wan face a sickly smile of courtesy. Sir Hugh Daway sat alone in a travelling britzka; while Cuthbert, Burton, the two agents, and a few country gentlemen, on horseback, completed the procession.

As each carriage passed, the country people were not backward in their observations.

“ There’s my Lord and his young Lady. Bless your Lordship and your Ladyship, and the little lords and ladies as is coming !”

“ And there’s my Lady Norah, bless her milk-white skin !” responded an old crone in the benedictory chorus.

“ And ye’ve not forgotten ould Biddy Tooley, my young Lady; and sure this is the petticoat your Ladyship gave me. It’s getting as ould as myself, my Lady;

but there's more in the same shop, my Lady; and the fairies tould me that yer babies will be as beautiful as yer-self."

"Go away, Biddy; I know you of old," answered Norah. "You've gone back to your bad ways, I hear."

"Faith, and her Ladyship has become proud!" said the old woman, as she turned away; "but I'll be even wid her."

"And there's the finest lady in the county," shrieked the old crone, spitefully, but in real admiration of Edith's fair face, as the girl smiled and bowed graciously to her father's dependants.

"And may Heaven send ye a good husband, my Lady! Sure it is ye couldn't find a better one in the whole universe than Master Cuthbert yonder," shouted another.

Cuthbert had trotted to the side of the carriage, and was conversing with Lady Elmwood.

Blushing at the artless truth, Edith furtively raised her eyes. Her father was looking at her stedfastly, and the poor girl blushed the deeper.

At length the procession reached Bradon Lodge, and Lord Elmwood's barouche turned up the avenue.

Cuthbert was preparing to follow, but Lord Elmwood beckoned as though wishing to speak to him. Cuthbert leant over the side of the carriage.

"Beaconsfield has begged me to send you to his house at once," whispered the old peer. "I am loath to part with you, but he is in distress, and I should be wretched at keeping you from him. You will see that you have not lost much in losing Lady Norah."

The corner of Lord Elmwood's face twitched as he was speaking.

"Had I wished for revenge," thought Cuthbert, "it could not have been more complete."

And his spirits sank as he rode on to Beston.

CHAPTER XXX.

CLOUDS.

CUTHBERT soon reached Lord Beaconsfield's carriage. The crowd was still shouting in hearty welcome; but Cuthbert perceived a constraint amidst the four occupants of the barouche. Lady Beaconsfield appeared curious and distressed. A sullen gloom bespread the features of the two men, while Norah, though evidently not at her ease, occasionally looked round

them with a defiant smile, and from her eye there flashed a glance of boldness and determination that shocked and frightened those who loved her.

At length they reached the house. Cuthbert assisted Lady Beaconsfield to alight. Dawnay was likewise ready to offer his arm to Norah ; but Beaconsfield, pushing past, seized his sister, and led her into the entrance hall.

The motion did not pass unobserved. Burton perceived it with anxiety, the agent with astonishment, and Mistress Tooley, who had found her way to the hall door by a path across the park, chuckled with satisfaction.

The ladies retired to their rooms, and Beaconsfield, taking his cousin by the arm, led him into a small library alone.

“Cuthbert,” he said, “thank God on

your knees that you did not marry Norah. She is unworthy of any honest man. She has a husband as good, as noble a fellow as ever trod the earth. She treats him like a dog, and conducts herself like a ballet girl."

Cuthbert was silent.

"Did you observe that fellow?" continued the young Earl; "he has forced himself here at Norah's invitation. I hope to Heaven I shall be able to contain myself in my own house; but I have more than once been almost tempted to strike him."

"Have you spoken to Norah? Has your wife spoken to her?"

"Yes, we have. I wrote to you how she treated me. She's like quicksilver. There's no fixing her in any way."

"Of course you have said nothing to

Burney. Has he spoken to you on the subject?"

"No, poor fellow! but I have gathered from what she has said that there have been some words about it. He is such a gentleman that he does not like to annoy us; but he cannot always conceal his vexation. What can he do?"

The best thing would be to get Dawnay away as soon as you can. I dare say by thinking over the matter you will be able to hit upon some expedient for doing so. Speaking to Norah is, you say, no use. I can well believe it. If a woman is once bent on behaving foolishly, no words will prevent her from carrying out her intention."

"But the worst is, that I don't know how to get rid of Dawnay. He's such a cool hand!"

"I have a plan in my head. You

might all be invited to Bradon, and give Dawnay his congé. I would take good care there should be no room for him with us."

But the plan was never carried into effect.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL.

MORE than a year had elapsed.

The winter had passed away, and the spring was approaching. Cuthbert, engrossed with his pursuits and the amelioration of the people, had ceased to feel the acuteness of his grief. Occasionally his loss was for a short time recalled to his thoughts. A chance word, or a bright sunset, would occasionally shoot a pang across his mind. Thus in certain changing

seasons the wounded soldier will feel his wounds aching as from the limb which has long been severed.

But in the earnestness of his pursuits Cuthbert found the best consolation. His feelings, benumbed by sorrow, lost much of their intensity. His intelligence still taught him compassion for the sufferings of others, while he had learnt equanimity in his own.

And with his friends Cuthbert's time was past not unpleasantly. Burney, Edward, Burton, and himself, formed themselves into a committee, nominally headed by Lord Elmwood, and deriving much assistance from his advice for] the practical remedy of evils and the development of resources. A railway was projected and commenced; emigration was encouraged and rewarded. The idle were sent to lands where labour was indis-

pensable to life, the industrious remained at home, finding both labour and subsistence.

With Cuthbert every undertaking seemed to prosper if projected for the benefit of others. His first client Casey had obtained an advantageous employment in London, under a railway company. The tenantry of Bradon had begun to recognize rent as a legal institution; its payment as a possible contingency.

Barney and those after his kind had disappeared from the neighbourhood. Some had emigrated, either by accident or design. Some had been reformed. Others had been hanged. And in a worldly point of view Cuthbert's own affairs had assumed no unfavourable phase. The tide had turned towards Ireland; and certain

sums of money philanthropically laid out in the railway, and other such Irish investments, were in a fair way to realize no inconsiderable profit. He seemed to turn to gold all that came under his influence. His fortunes were in the ascendant. As the man of contemplation was converted into the man of action, as poetry made room for business, so had his material fortunes been realized to the disappointment of his imagination and its more elevated aspirations.

There is an old proverb respecting the incompatibility of success in love and in wealth. And Cuthbert felt the truth of the axiom. As man progresses in life, as illusions are turned into realities, as hope grows fainter and the actual assumes a greater value, so, despite himself and unconsciously, does man degenerate in the

qualities that form the delight of his youth.

The man of business in vain endeavours to combine in himself the man of pleasure. The grossness of his occupations can rarely be severed from the diversion of his leisure hours. Insensibly his mind and his conversation turn towards the object of his pursuits. Even in his love can be discovered traces of his profession. The stamp is indelibly affixed even to the presents laid at the feet of his mistress. The massive jewelry of a banker, the curious supper of a wine-merchant, the historical novel of a statesman, or the sonnet of a poet, all equally bespeak the fixed bent of his ideas. And thus, however elevated his vocation, a man after his entrance into the world insensibly loses those attributes which endear him as in youth to the heart of a woman.

Woman is loath to share her dominion.

As "man's love is to his life a thing apart," so does woman reject the unintentional slight. As in him fame and ambition increase, so does she resent the abstract partner of his affections.

And such is the problem of the social success so often attained by individuals of inferior merit. Woman is the arbitress of fashion, the dispensatrix of social distinction. To please her the votary must worship at no other altar. She will not knowingly be made an instrument or a stepping-stone. At times, it is true, conquered by the flattery of greatness, she may stoop to serve the strong. But her reward will be power to serve the weak.

Such were the thoughts of Cuthbert, as

in the path of active life he learnt to moderate his desires, to curb his imagination, and to define the course of his ambition.

Many fail who, when young, are thrust into prominence, from a lack of concentration. Their studies are desultory, their desires vague, their will filtered. At every object in life equally they sprinkle their ambition. Politicians and dandies, old and young, divine and coquette, all in turn are wooed indifferently. Friendship is frittered away in small services.

And time rolls on, and the goal of life at length looms in the distance.

The man of many friends summons his motley band—congenial spirits from the vasty deep. But it is too late. The incantation fails in the wide extended circle. They do not come when

he doth call for them; and the humbler magician, with his one familiar, soars into æther, grasps the desired prize, swooping undisturbed into the well-earned pedestal.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A COUNTRY BALL.

SATISFIED with the improved state of affairs, Lord Beaconsfield at length felt justified in giving one entertainment to his neighbours. His domestic matters had for some time progressed favourably. Dawnay had mitigated his attentions to Norah, and had been repeatedly absent on tours to different portions of the kingdom. Lady Beaconsfield had rendered herself popular in the county, and his own

name had been mentioned with respect and admiration by all parties. Nay, to his surprise the public journals of his own party had described him as a man of talent, fitted to take a part in the administration of affairs; and even the prints, less friendly in their criticisms, had never questioned the justice of such an ambition.

On this occasion Cuthbert had for a few days taken up his abode at Beston. His presence had been much required at the issue of invitations, and the preparation of the festivities.

The day at last arrived. Lord and Lady Beaconsfield, Burney, and Cuthbert, were assembled for an early dinner in the only room sacred from intrusion. It was a pretty little octagon apartment, in a remote turret, yclept a boudoir. Lady Beaconsfield professed to occupy it when

discontented with her Lord. Strange as it may appear her Lord had hitherto been in the habit of sharing her solitude.

None of the party had as yet made their toilet for the evening. All had been engaged in superintending the arrangements; and in their morning dress they were about to snatch a hasty meal before preparing for the evening fête.

The hour for the meal, five o'clock, had arrived, and two of the convivæ were still absent. There was not much appearance of gaiety amongst the four already in the apartment. None could have foretold the approach of such amusement as had been announced in the county paper. All seemed uneasy, and conversation was slack. Lady Beaconsfield, reclining in a large chair, leant on her arm as her hand shaded her face. Burney sat before the fire, his teeth firmly set, and a

frown of anger on his brow. Cuthbert opened one by one the richly-bound books that lay on the writing table. The master of the house moved restlessly from the door to the window, now hastily striding down the long corridor, now peering through the window as though wishing to pierce the darkness.

At length was heard a distant groan from the heavy hinges of the hall door, followed after the lapse of a few seconds by the sound of footsteps moving rapidly through the passage. The door was opened by the butler for the admission of Norah and Sir Hugh Dawnay.

They entered amidst unbroken silence. None noticed them but Cuthbert.

“Bring dinner,” shouted the young peer to the servant; and Cuthbert perceived a meaning glance rapidly exchanged between the late arrivals.

"I'm afraid we're very late," said Norah. "There was no holly for this room."

"This room is not to be opened," answered Lord Beaconsfield, sternly.

"I thought it was, and therefore went into the village in search of some."

"I think you might have sent a servant, Norah."

"They were all so engaged, I did not like to take them from their work. I was kept a long time, and coming back I met Sir Hugh at the lodge. He has had a long walk it appears."

The servants appearing with the dinner, interrupted the conversation. Burney, who had never moved, rose to place his chair at the table. Lady Beaconsfield was not quite so prompt in her movements. Her handkerchief was brought into requisition, and it was evi-

dent as she advanced to the light that her soft eyes bore the trace of tears.

The meal proceeded in the same mournful manner. All were silent, and, save a few incidental remarks, none seemed inclined to enter into conversation. Occasionally Sir Hugh Dawnay forced an observation, but the effort was too plainly visible.

Norah alone was enabled to preserve her equanimity.

“One would think we were all going to a funeral,” she exclaimed, smiling. “No one would imagine we were all preparing for a ball. I must say, Edward, that if any of your guests were to see us now, they would not feel highly flattered at the manner in which we appear to anticipate the honour of their company.”

No response followed the sally, as

Norah, with an air of innocent wonder, looked round for applause. Sir Hugh Dawnay, it is true, endeavoured to force a smile on his well-disciplined countenance; but for a second time in his life the man of the world was at fault.

At length the dinner was over. The ladies seated themselves on either side of the fireplace. The cloth was removed amidst the same portentous silence. As the last step of the last footman resounded along the passage Lord ~~Elmwood~~ spoke for the first time.

"It is time for you to go and dress, Dawnay," he said. The tone of his voice could not be mistaken. The Baronet, however, had regained to a certain extent his presence of mind. Quietly swallowing a glass of wine and finishing a biscuit, he left the room. Cuthbert prepared to follow him.

“Don’t go away, Cuthbert. I have nothing to say but what you may hear.”

It was Burney spoke. Calmly rising, he turned himself towards Norah. Edward stood behind his wife’s chair. Cuthbert resumed his seat at the table and anxiously played with a glass.

At length Burney spoke calmly, and as a gentleman. He made no parade of injury, no threat.

“Norah,” he said, “I have already spoken to you more than once, and at rare intervals, on a subject which nearly concerns us all. I have spoken to you earnestly and in private. I thought for some time you had complied with my wishes, but unfortunately the events of to-night have shown me my mistake. Now, in the presence of your nearest relations I speak to you once again. I renew my earnest request that you

will avoid this appearance of intimacy with Sir Hugh Dawnay, which it is proper neither for you to maintain nor for me to sanction."

With a smile, intended to be cutting, Norah bent her head ironically.

"Indeed," she replied. "If that is all you have to say, I don't think you need have made such a parade about so trifling a matter."

"It is no trifling matter, Norah; and I must beg for a distinct promise on your part to be more guarded for the future."

"Then, perhaps, you will endow me with some prophetic gift of foresight. I confess I cannot see how I was to guard against a chance meeting at the lodge gate with Sir Hugh Dawnay."

As Norah continued in the same strain, Julia felt her chair tremble from her

husband's emotion. Fearful of an outbreak, she pressed his hand in silent entreaty. With the same smile Norah bowed to her sister-in-law.

"Thank you, dear," she said, "for giving me so striking an example of conjugal tenderness."

Burney's cheek began to redden; but with his habitual self-mastery he answered,

"I am sorry, Norah, you should add deceit to my causes of complaint. I have reason to know that for more than two hours this afternoon you have been walking in the plantation alone with Dawnay."

For a moment Norah's composure forsook her. But summoning her energy, she resumed in the same tone—

"So I am indebted for lessons to all your family. I thank you, Mr. Burney, for teaching me that you set spies on

my actions. I must say I admire your choice of confidants. I suppose Mrs. Tooley was your informant."

"You mistake my character. My fault has been the other way. Edward was anxious at your protracted absence, and himself went out in search of you. Mrs. Tooley, I believe, was as you observe his informant. He asked her, like other persons he met, whether you had been seen in the neighbourhood. She answered, I suppose with truth, that while gathering faggots she had noticed you passing at various intervals with Sir Hugh Dawnay."

"And suppose I did, Mr. Burney. I did not imagine when I married you that I was to leave off the acquaintance of all my friends. I have known Sir Hugh since we were children — long before I had the pleasure of making

your acquaintance. And if I did meet him privately, it was only on account of your absurd jealousy and Edward's folly. You yourself say, I must confess your magnanimity is overpowering, that your mighty wishes have lately been attended to. Well, if the truth must be known, Sir Hugh wished to speak to me to-day on a private matter; and afraid of arousing your suspicions, I consented to meet him in the plantation. I suppose you wish to know his reasons. He is in love, not with me, but with Edith St. Elme, who it appears does not reciprocate his feelings; and he wished to enlist me on his side, knowing that you are all prejudiced against him."

"I am glad of this explanation, Norah; but scarcely satisfied with this mode of proceeding. You know very well that

had you given me the slightest intimation of the circumstance, I should not have raised any objection to a conversation on the subject with Sir Hugh. As it is, I can only repeat my request, that you will be more guarded for the future."

"And for the future, Mr. Burney, I must beg that you will not harass me and insult me by your absurd vagaries. I consider it my duty to be civil to all my brother's guests."

"Pray, take no trouble on that account, my Lady Norah," interrupted Edward. "I have suffered a great deal too much from Sir Hugh Dawnay's friendship to continue it much longer."

"You are too good, Lord Beaconsfield. But I suppose for your influence sake you wish me to be civil to the charming society you are gathering around you; and having had quite enough discussion,

I shall beg leave to retire and get myself ready to assist Julia in doing the honours."

And with easy grace Lady Norah Burney turned and quitted the apartment.

No remark followed her departure. With a sigh of resignation Burney soon after repaired to his dressing room, leaving Cuthbert and the Beaconsfields, whose rooms lay not far from the boudoir.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HURRIED COUNCILS.

“WELL, Julia,” began the Earl, “what do you think of Norah’s story?”

“I am so glad of it, Edward. She has been indiscreet, it is true, but that is all.”

“Yes, if her story be true. But I know her of old. She was never at a loss for an excuse, and I can’t say I believe this one.”

“Pray, forgive my speaking on such a subject, Edward,” interposed Cuthbert.

"But in justice to Norah, I must say that the Elmwoods have told me of a proposal by Dawnay in the course of the summer."

"Well, Heaven knows, I hope it may be true. If it is not, her conduct would be infinitely worse, lugging in that poor girl's name. However, I shall get rid of Master Dawnay very shortly. I wish, Cuddie, I had adopted your suggestion the first week we came here."

"Pray, do nothing rashly Edward," observed his wife. "As it is, all may blow over; and if Norah is annoyed, or Sir Hugh thinks himself ill-used, there may be a scandal."

The fair Julia since her marriage had advanced wonderfully in worldly knowledge.

"Well, we will talk over the matter quietly. What o'clock is it? Half-past

seven. Well, there's time for one cigar. Let us go to the harness room."

"You can smoke here, for once, Edward, if you like. But recollect, as they say in the House of Lords, this is not to be erected into a precedent."

"Brava, Julia! But I will not defile my lady's bower. Never. Besides, I want a mouthful of fresh air after this scene. Come along, Cuddie."

And the "cousins, as in old times, walked away together, happy in the society of each other.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE WRONG MAN.

THE stables, and consequently the harness room, lay at the back of the house. Edward was not much of a Sybarite, but he loved his cigar. Under the humble designation of a harness room, he had at an early period of his tenure caused to be erected a snug apartment, decorated with his state trappings and pictures of racehorses, foils and chibouks there to indulge alone or with his

friends in that odious but fascinating vegetable.

With a refinement of luxury, he had also built a covered passage communicating with this retreat and an adjoining billiard room. The entrance to the passage opened on a lobby near the kitchens, and was most accessible by the back stairs.

The many corridors of the old rambling house were thronged with strangers. After the fashion of Irish hospitality, all his retainers had been bidden as spectators and attendants at the ball.

At length, turning a corner, the cousins arrived at a corridor which apparently contained only a little boy. At the other end they perceived the retreating figure of a woman.

As they approached, the figure stopped, and they caught a few words along the deserted passage.

“There be the gentleman. On wid you.” The little boy hurried along, and running to the young peer held up a note.

Edward took it with a kindly nod from the little messenger, who half frightened retreated a few steps.

The letter bore no address.

“Who gave it you?” inquired the peer.

“The maid, please your honour. She told me to bring it to your honour, and that ye’d give me sixpence.”

“There it is, my little man. You can run away now. But take care ye don’t eat too much before the supper is served. Leave something for the gentry.”

With a rustic salutation the barelegged child paddled away,

“What can it be? Captain Rock, or a premature valentine?” observed Cuthbert.

He looked at Edward. His cousin was

leaning against the wall, his eyes starting from his head.

"Cuddie, Cuddie, read that! My God! my"—

Cuthbert mechanically took the note. It was in Norah's handwriting. It contained but a few words.

"Such a scene, darling Hugh. Our walk was discovered. I knew that old woman would betray us. She has hated me since as a child I detected her stealing. However, it has all passed over. I put it off on your love for E. St. E. Recollect that little episode in your life, in case of accidents. Yours, N."

Edward stood for a short space motionless. At length he spoke.

"We are close by his room, Cuddie. Come with me directly. Better have it over at once."

"Do reflect, Edward, for a moment."

"If you will not come with me, I shall ask the first buckeen I meet. It will be a great amusement to him."

The young Earl laughed bitterly.

Sir Hugh Dawnay's room was situated in the passage which had witnessed the short and terrible scene. The boy, a stranger, entrusted by Norah's maid through idleness with the commission, had taken the right direction. The letter would soon have been delivered, as the boy, under the guidance of Biddy Tooley, approached the Baronet's apartment, had not the sudden appearance of Beaconsfield and Cuthbert suggested to the old woman's diabolical mind the possibility of mischief and revenge.

Without knocking at the door the young Earl entered his guest's room.

"For God's sake control yourself,"

whispered Cuthbert, as he turned the handle.

“Trust me,” answered the young Earl.

Dawnay’s valet prepared to leave the room.

“You need not go, Atkinson,” observed his master.

“I beg your pardon. I have a few words to say to you in private.”

The servant turned away in silence.

“By accident,” began the young peer. “By accident I have discovered the full extent of my sister’s crime and of your disgraceful treachery. To gratify, not your passion, but your vanity, you have betrayed the confidence of two friends, you have violated the rules of hospitality and of honour. I am a stronger man than you, Sir Hugh, and I should be justified in throwing you out of that window. But fortunately no one but

myself and my cousin is aware of all the circumstances of your conduct. Otherwise no consideration for yourself would prevent my taking a summary vengeance. But I bear in mind that your victim is my sister, that her husband is the brother of my wife. For this reason I shall endeavour to avoid any public scandal; and I now come to propose to you a course which you must adopt, if you still wish to appear to the world in a character you do not possess, that of a gentleman. You will appear to-night at the ball as if nothing had occurred between us. But at midnight you will leave the house. I shall order horses for your carriage to be in waiting. You will not stop till you arrive at some town not nearer than a hundred miles from this house. The place I leave to your own choice. You will then inform me where and when I

can meet you, and believe me I shall not miss the appointment."

Meanwhile Dawnay had recovered some portion of his usual assurance. With a smiling countenance he answered,

"Believe me, my dear Beaconsfield, you strangely misapprehend the circumstances."

"Do not add falsehood, Sir Hugh Dawnay, to your other offences. This paper will show you that all explanation is useless."

Pale and with trembling hand Dawnay took the paper. But even at that moment his audacity did not entirely forsake him.

"So you have opened my letter, Lord Beaconsfield," he began with a sneer.

"The note was not directed, as you will see. It was delivered into my hands as though for myself."

"And suppose I refuse your offer.

Recollect your sister's reputation is in my hands."

"If you do not immediately comply with my demands, her reputation will be, as you yourself imply, ruined. In that case I shall have no object in staying my hand. And I tell you, Sir Hugh Dawnay, that unless you immediately give me in writing—your word is insufficient—a promise to follow the course I now suggest, I shall summon into this room every gentleman in this house, explain to them my reason, and inflict on you at once the punishment due to a traitor and a coward."

"For Lady Norah's sake, and not on account of your threats, I agree to your proposal."

"Now, you will please to write the words that I shall dictate."

Opening his portfolio, Dawnay wrote—

"In consequence of some differences

with Lord Beaconsfield, I promised to leave his house at twelve o'clock to-night, and to proceed to ——— or a town at an equal distance from Beston. On his part, Lord Beaconsfield undertakes to meet me at any hour and at any place I may choose to name, there to give to our differences the only solution of which they are susceptible."

"Add the date and your signature. You will of course not approach Lady Norah in the course of the evening."

"And now, Cuthbert," said Beaconsfield as soon as they had left the room, "we have a hard part to play. No one must have the least suspicion that anything has gone wrong. To-morrow we will consider what is best to be done with that unhappy girl. I cannot make up my mind to leave Burney in ignorance of her conduct, and yet an exposure would render him eter-

nally wretched, ruin her reputation, and kill my poor mother. Think over it, Cuddie; I have no advisers but yourself. To-night, however, we must keep a smiling countenance. I only wish I had some portion of that villain's self-command. I always distrusted him. Even now, with his paper safe in my pocket, I shall not feel safe till he is clear out of the house. There goes his valet, I dare say as great a scoundrel as himself. Dawnay will want his things packed up. I wish I could do him that service myself. However we have no time to lose. The house is filling, and we are not even dressed."

Edward had reason to distrust the smooth-faced menial. The noblest combinations can be destroyed by the tattling flirtations of a valet and a maid.

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